

Science and Secularization: English Drama, the Moon, and Theological Cosmologies, 1592-1614

by

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Abstract

The theological challenges of the cosmological distortions introduced by the “new philosophy” are well-attested in the work of 17th-century poets like John Donne and John Milton. Yet despite a recent religious turn in the study of early modern drama, comparatively little attention has been paid to its theological registering of the Scientific Revolution. “Science and Secularization” examines dramatic articulations of the relationship between theological and cosmological systems at the turn of the 17th-century, a period in which both were developing under the influence of English church politics and new astronomical observations. Prefaced by a brief treatment of Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus* (c. 1592), my study focuses on three plays, Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (c. 1596) and *The Tempest* (c. 1611), and Webster’s *The Duchess of Malfi* (c. 1614). These plays are linked by a mutual concern not only with spiritual agents – devils, fairies, and airy spirits – but also with the moon’s traditional role as a cosmological linchpin, the boundary between the Aristotelian spheres of mutability and change, and the most obvious source of astrological influence over the tides and the humours of the body. Yet two of the plays closely follow the publication of Galileo’s

Starry Messenger (1610), whose telescopic observations fueled Copernican speculations and presented a vivid new picture of the moon. The sequence of plays provides a historicized view of theological accommodations to this striking scientific development.

“Science and Secularization” engages theories of secularization to read the plays. I read the plays’ different understandings of spiritual agents as reflecting processes of “desacralization” and “resacralization,” the shifting loci of supernatural activity in nature and the human body, including the senses and feelings. Yet the plays consider these immanent understanding of supernatural activity within quite distinct providential frameworks that ground their own social and political theories. In both immanent and providential terms, I suggest ways gender works in the plays to resist certain claims of secularization theory. I also suggest that in dramatizing both immanent and providential effects, the plays imagine and enact the theatre’s own shifting role in the theological cosmologies they articulate.

Dedication and Acknowledgements

I glimpsed these moons in indistinct phases; their tides were unpredictable, their fertile moments unforeseen. I dedicate this thesis to those who gave me new ways of tuning in. To Mom and Dad, for the vantage; to Nicky, for inspired lunacy; to Becca, for the rips and swells; to Asa, for wonder, and a new world.

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Introduction: Theological Cosmologies and the Moon

Though I have often described it as such, this dissertation is not really a study of the reception of Galileo's 1610 telescopic observations of the moon in English literature. The sources for such a study, if restricted to works that name Galileo, would be few in the first decade, and only one of the three plays I study here, *The Duchess of Malfi*, mentions Galileo by name. Of the other two, one, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was written a decade and a half before Galileo's lunar observations; the other, *The Tempest*, I take to be dated to 1611. Both Shakesperean plays are packed with lunar imagery, and both are unique in Shakespeare's canon by virtue of their extensive stagings of spiritual beings, whether *Midsummer's* fairies and *The Tempest's* "airy spirit" Ariel. In trying to understand the role of the moon and spirits in these three plays, this dissertation has become a study of the impact of the lunar observations on the early modern tendency towards literary systems-building, the tendency to use literature to think about the relationship between ethics, politics, physics, and theology by building literary cosmologies;¹ I include in these cosmologies supernatural beings.² But this tendency towards systems-building and the terms in which it is conceived, are themselves historically contingent. As I will argue, the lunar observations tested and almost dissolved this tendency. But first I will describe them and their initial reception in Europe and England.

1 Galileo's observations and their English reception

On March 12, 1610 the printing of Galileo's *Siderius Nuncius* (usually translated at *Sidereale* or *Starry Messenger*) was completed in Venice. In it Galileo described the results of the telescopic observations of the skies he had been conducting since autumn and continuing during the book's printing (Galilei, *Siderius* 19-20). The book sold out

¹ I borrow this concept from Liza Blake's ongoing project (tentatively titled "Early Modern Literary Physics"), though I am less concerned with its specifically literary dimensions.

² cp. Kristen Poole's study of *Supernatural Environments in Shakespeare's England*.

within a week (Biagioli 30), no doubt aided by advance leaks (or publicity) of the book's stunning revelations (Galilei, *Siderius* 11-12, 90). First, through a careful description of the changing patterns of light and darkness near the moon's surprisingly irregular terminator, Galileo concluded that the lunar surface was uneven, marked by mountains and valleys like the Earth. Second, the telescope revealed a vast number of new stars in familiar constellations and resolved the blur of the Milky Way into distinct stellar bodies. Third, through a sequence of observations conducted between January 7 and March 2 exhaustively replicated in diagrams in the book, Galileo had discovered four new wandering stars – that is, planets – in orbit around Jupiter. In an eventually successful bid for patronage, and with the permission of the Tuscan court, he named these moons of Jupiter the Medicean stars (Galilei, *Siderius* 17-19; Westman 464-468).

The book's claims spread rapidly through Europe in the subsequent months, followed slightly more slowly by the book itself and substantially more slowly by high-quality telescopes enabling the investigation of its claims (Galilei, *Siderius* 87, Westman 457-460). By April, Kepler had publicly declared his support for the findings (Westman 460-465), and in May Galileo negotiated a position at the Tuscan court (Westman 465-8). There was immediate resistance in letters and print over the summer by the mathematician-astrologer Magini in Bologna and his secretary Horky, who, attacking the legitimacy of Galileo's observations, attempted but failed to enlist Kepler in their cause (Westman 468-476; Galilei, *Siderius* 92-93, 101). Yet others soon endorsed the observations themselves, if not Galileo's conclusions. By March 1611 in a letter to Bellarmine, Jesuit astronomers approved all the phenomena identified by Galileo in the previous year – the oval shape of Saturn (its rings, interpreted by Galileo as two satellites), and the phases of Venus – as well as the claims of the *Nuncius*, having themselves discerned stars in the Milky Way and other nebulas, the apparent inequality of the moon (though with reservations about its actual unevenness), and the motion of the wandering stars (Galilei, *Siderius* 111-12). One of the authors of this letter, Christopher Clavius, acknowledged these observations in print as potential evidence for Copernicanism – at least demanding new explanations of the appearances – in his 1611 final edition of commentary to Sacrobosco's *Sphere* (Westman 481-4).

While the Jesuits confirmed the accuracy of the observations, there were many reasons to object to Galileo's interpretive claims. First, Horky and others mistrusted the telescope itself, a new instrument whose practical use was difficult and whose theoretical basis, despite Kepler's 1604 description of the way the eye's lens formed the retinal image, was not yet well understood (Galilei, *Sidereus* 88-89). Second, while the novae and comets discovered in the preceding few decades had tested the theory of an immutable superlunary sphere, the observation of a rough and uneven moon was a dramatic failure of heavenly perfection. Third, the claim that the Medicean stars orbited around Jupiter challenged the geocentric theory, and Galileo observed in print that they could be used to rebut objections to Copernicanism – the apparent case of Jupiter proved that there was no reason Earth could not be the centre of motion for the moon while itself revolving around the sun (*Sidereus* 16).

Most significant for my dissertation is Robert Westman's recent argument that the whole Copernican question was itself implicated in the controversies about astrology. Magini and Horky's objections were plausibly motivated by fear that the discovery of new planets, the Medicean stars, could undermine the entire edifice of astrology, which depended on the conventional seven (Westman 469). As Westman has also argued, the astrological tradition depended on a conventional assignment of planetary influence over certain material qualities based on planetary order (eg. Westman 52ff); a Copernican rearrangement, one which moreover recentred the moon around the earth, marking it as different from other planetary bodies, challenged these explanations (Westman 310), even if they were otherwise contested (eg. Westman 187, 409). Kepler's own Copernican versions of astrology involved a variety of adjustments. Kepler could retain the conventional belief in lunar influence over the humours though deriving some of its power from the sun (Westman 324ff), then abandon the idea that the sun and moon inherently have different effects on elemental qualities, explaining their different effects through light alone (Westman 379). Kepler explained the special effects of astrological influence on the decentred Earth by attributing to it a planetary soul of semi-rational ability able to measure incident angles. This semi-rational soul explained the effects on the earth's humours – for example, its tides and weather – by analogy to the moon's

effects on the humours of the human body (Westman 380). By contrast, in his theory of the tides, published in book 4 of his *Dialogue on the Two Chief World Systems*, but likely written as early as 1616, Galileo would argue against the use of lunar influence or occult qualities to explain the tides; the motion of the earth, he thought, could account for it alone, and was, he believed, his strongest argument yet for Copernicanism (Westman 495).³ Galileo cannot be said to have rejected astrology outright, since he practiced it in life, both professionally and on the personal occasions of his daughters' birth (Westman 453). In a letter of 1611, he argued that the Medicean stars' influence was possibly calculable despite their relatively small size compared to Jupiter. Yet Galileo's attitude to astrology seems to have remained tentative and in many cases isolated from his other cosmological considerations.⁴ In chapter 2, I will discuss more locally the differences between Galileo and Kepler on occult qualities and explain how the imbrication of matter theory and changing visual theory could form a link between the new technique of telescopic observation and the question of astrological influence. Westman's argument about the relationship between cosmological structure and astrological theory however establishes the basic point that questions about the substance of the cosmos could implicate astrology in its most general forms.

While my first chapter treats the role of lunar influence in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, a pre-Galilean play, my second and third chapters claim awareness of Galileo's observations for two plays, *The Duchess of Malfi* and *The Tempest*, which were apparently written early in the 1610s. *The Tempest* is mentioned as having been performed in November 1611 (Vaughan and Vaughn ed. 6), and *The Duchess* was performed before December 1614, perhaps as early as late 1612 (Brennan ed. xvi). However both plays were first published in 1623, *The Duchess* with a title page claiming to include unperformed scenes. The late texts and possibility of revisions in both cases reduces the pressure to establish an early English reception of Galileo's observations, but there is in any case ample evidence; studies by Marjorie Nicolson, Stillman Drake, and

³ Galileo's pre-Newtonian theory was, of course, wrong.

⁴ For Galileo's attitude to astrology, including translations of the 1611 letter to Piero Dini, see Campion and Kollerstrom eds.

Mordechai Feingold have traced the early intellectual and literary reception in some detail.

Galileo's admittedly small number of English correspondents was augmented by several second-degree connections including a large number of English students, travellers, and expats who may have studied with or encountered Galileo in Padua (Feingold, "Galileo" 412-414; Nicolson 439). The English ambassador to Venice, Henry Wotton, had significant connections to Kepler and to two Scots, Thomas Seggeth (a friend of Kepler's) and John Wedderburn (a student of Galileo's), who participated in the early polemical defenses of Galileo in 1610-11 (Drake, "Galileo" 417-418, Feingold, "Galileo" 412-414, Nicolson 437-8). Wotton's famous letter to Robert Cecil on the day of the *Nuncius*'s publication gives a sense of the immediate reaction to the book:

Now touching the occurrents of the present, I send herewith unto his Majesty the strangest piece of news (as I may justly call it) that he hath ever yet received from any part of the world; which is the annexed book (come abroad this very day) of the Mathematical Professor at Padua, who by the help of an optical instrument (which both enlargeth and approximateth the object) invented first in Flanders, and bettered by himself, hath discovered four new planets rolling about the sphere of Jupiter, besides many other unknown fixed stars; like wise, the true cause of the *Via Lactea*, so long searched; and lastly, that the moon is not spherical, but endued with many prominences, and which is of all the strangest, illuminated with the solar light by reflection from the body of the earth, as he seemeth to say. So, as upon the whole subject he hath first overthrown all former astronomy—for we must have a new sphere to save the appearances—and next all astrology. For the virtue of these new planets must needs vary the judicial part, and why may there not yet be more? These things I have been bold thus to discourse unto your Lordship, whereof here all corners are full. And the author runneth a fortune to be either exceeding famous or exceeding ridiculous. By the next ship your Lordship shall receive from me one of the above-named instruments, as it is bettered by this man. (qtd. in Westman 458; cp. Nicolson 440)

Westman stresses Wotton's acknowledgement of both the astronomical and astrological consequences of the new planets. But his reaction is more complex than one might expect; Eileen Reeves has observed Wotton's surprising alarm at Galileo's claim that the secondary light or ashen glow of the moon's shaded surface was produced by the earth's reflection (*Painting* 27), and in chapter 2 I will build on her work to argue that *The Duchess of Malfi* alludes to this property along with other aspects of the arguments

relating lunar substance to lunar appearance. By June, Thomas Hariot and his collaborator William Lower were discussing the news and comparing it to their own telescopic observations of the moon begun at the same time as Galileo's; Hariot's correspondence with Kepler may have been their source of knowledge of the book they had not yet seen (Nicolson 440-1). Over the next decade the *Nuncius* became inextricable from discussions of Copernicanism and telescopes became very popular in life and in literature (Feingold, "Galileo" 415; Nicolson 441). The lunar observations show up quite rapidly in university communities and curricula: an Oxford MA exam of 1611 asks whether the moon is habitable; Brian Twyne mentions Galileo's discoveries in print in a 1613 elegy on the death of Thomas Bodley; the *Nuncius* is recommended by tutors and mentioned in a school play (Feingold, "Galileo" 416-7). Galileo's theory of the tides reached England by 1619, and among others, influenced Francis Bacon, who nevertheless persevered in believing the moon influenced the tides. (Feingold, "Galileo" 415-6; Drake, "Galileo" 419).⁵

Interest in the discoveries was not confined to scholarly or scientific communities; it also shows up in literature almost immediately. Wotton's lifelong friend John Donne mixed the new astronomy with anti-Jesuit satire in his *Conclave Ignatii (Ignatius his Conclave)*, entered in the Stationer's Register January 24, 1611 (Nicolson 454); he made much of Galileo's claims that the Moon was a new world drawn close to the earth by the telescope. In his *Anniversaries* of 1611 and 1612 the new astronomy is also central. Readings of these texts are outside the scope of my dissertation, but Nicolson suggests the way the astronomy catches Donne's imagination here and in his verse letters between 1604 and 1614, but especially after 1610, and observes its recurrence later in his writing (Nicolson 449ff). Nicolson's mid-century work was characteristically more focused on astronomy than astrology; she stresses Donne's attention in *The First Anniversary* to changing cosmological structure, but as Seth Lobis emphasizes in his study of

⁵ Nicolson, Drake, and Feingold provide broader overviews. Feingold's *Mathematician's Apprenticeship* surveys English scientific communities' reception of new astronomical ideas.

seventeenth-century sympathy, Donne is equally attentive to the potential failure of astrological influence:

What artist now dares boast that he can bring
 Heaven hither, or constellate anything,
 So as the influence of those stars may be
 Imprisoned in an herb, or charm, or tree,
 And do by touch, all which those stars could do?
 The art is lost, and correspondence too. (391-6, qtd. in Lobis 15-16)

Nicolson also observes Jonson's immediate interest in the observations in *Love Freed from Folly and Ignorance*, presented on February 3, 1611, and his revisiting them in *News from the New World Discovered in the Moon*, presented in 1621, and *The Staple of the News*, presented 1626 (Nicolson 446-8). Though providing a few more examples from other writers, Nicolson observes that "references to the telescope itself are so frequent in English literature after 1610 that any attempt to list them would result only in a dull catalogue" (441). Yet in a rare moment of attentiveness to astrology, discussing Shakespeare's apparent silence about astronomy, she conjectures that *King Lear* may be influenced by the controversy over the novas of 1600 and 1604, which she observes "stimulated *astrology* as greatly as *astronomy*" (443). Following Westman to develop this hint, in chapter 3 I read *The Tempest* as a response to the lunar observations that grapples with their significance for theories of lunar influence. If Donne and Jonson found themselves captivated by the lunar observations, why not Shakespeare, who, I argue in chapter 1, had made lunar influence central to the cosmology of *Midsummer*? Moreover, in chapter 2, I argue that Webster's *Duchess of Malfi*, a text Nicolson surprisingly ignores given its explicit citation of Galileo, is focused less on astronomy than the problem of lunar influence. With the ground thus prepared, in chapter 3 *The Tempest*'s many references to the moon can be read in the clear light of Galileo's observations.⁶

⁶ Scott Maisano's recent description of *The Tempest* as a "scientific romance," cites Galileo's lunar observations as informing the play's non-Aristotelian cosmos; yet though he reads several scenes in the play as (generally) atomist in orientation, he says nothing about the play's many references to the moon and its influence. My chapter 3 provides a more comprehensive reading of the play as a tentative interpretation of Galileo's observations framed by political and theological concerns.

2 Theological cosmologies and the moon

The reasons that the lunar observations could dissolve a tendency towards systems-building were therefore many, given the moon's prominent roles as a cosmological linchpin, whether as the boundary between the Aristotelian spheres of change and permanence or as the most obvious source of astrological influence causing the familiar phenomena of the tides. As the above brief discussion of Kepler suggests, lunar influence was also linked to human fertility, whether through a conventional association with menstruation or through more technical positings of lunar influence over the body's humors. Aristotelian cosmology had already been challenged by the novas and comets of the 1570s, whose apparent location in the superlunary sphere had challenged theories of cosmic immutability, and Kepler had used the dramatic nova of 1604 to further the Copernican program (Westman 223-258; 382-417). But Galileo's claim that he had seen a pitted and mountainous moon was an even more striking piece of evidence for both cosmic mutability and Copernican ideas; moreover it suggested that a planetary body had an unexpectedly terrestrial materiality. As Westman argues at length, the problems of cosmic substance and structure were both related to the status of astrology; new ideas regarding lunar substance therefore implicated understandings of lunar influence. The cosmological importance of the lunar observations is therefore relatively easily understandable – in addition to the suggestion that a new inhabitable planet had been discovered, theories of matter and astrology might also have to be reconsidered. The use of the telescope also presented epistemological challenges. My first chapter on *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is built around a particularly intricate understanding of lunar influence's unpredictable effects on fertility, and my second and third chapters suggest that the revelation of a mutable moon prompted a rethinking of the meaning of lunar influence on fertility and more generally. But what do these cosmological changes have to do with ethics, politics, and theology, and why did Galileo's observations in particular seem to be so important to the playwrights I am studying?

The specific answers are partly political and partly theological and differ for each play. But in general, the problem when combining a theological system with a cosmological one is understanding God's method of acting in the world; this usually takes the form of

an explanation of the means of providence, or at the particular level of individual soteriology, predestination.⁷ One's understanding of cosmology affects not only the specific means available to the deity – or the devil – for intervening in the world, but also the characterization of phenomena as natural or supernatural, as miracles or chance events, as signs or as delusions. To be clear, under this rubric I also include differing theological stances towards the existence and meaning of natural regularity and the nature of the human will, specifically its relationship to the will of God.

It is therefore striking, though perhaps not surprising, that astronomical motion, astrology, and the phenomena of the tides feature prominently in two influential 16th-century theological cosmologies. In a recent study of *Macbeth*, Kristen Poole distinguishes in the play a tension between cosmologies associated, on the one hand, with Calvinism, and on the other, with Richard Hooker (*Supernatural environments* 136-67). Arguing generally that theological flux produced conflicting spatial epistemologies, Poole associates with Calvin a model of “a cosmos dependent upon an unknowable and unpredictable divine will ... with potential for motion, modulation, transformation”; with Hooker she associates a model of “a cosmos predictably ordered by divinely established natural law ... while allowing for the occasional miracle ... structured by a solid and immutable frame” (139). Though Hooker acknowledges occasional “hiccups” (155) in natural laws, generally providence works through their regular means. For example, for Hooker, God's *law* bounds the sea, and the sea, like the rest of nature, generally obeys. Conversely, Calvin's *Institutes* describes God's providential *will* constantly at work sustaining the sky and earth, and preventing the sea from its natural desire to overwhelm the earth (143); as Poole argues, Calvin presents these acts as everyday divine violations of nature, comparable to the more famous Biblical miracles, for example the stopping of sun and moon at Gibeon or the sun's reversal for King Hezekiah (144). Stressing God's control over the motion of even a raindrop, Calvin generalizes to God's control over human will, itself understood as a form of motion (145-6); hence the Calvinist emphasis on God's individualized predestination. Poole observes the potential connection between

⁷ cp. Strier “Shakespeare and the Skeptics” 181.

Calvin and the medieval nominalism of Ockham, who stressed God's freedom to create the universe any way he liked against the rationalism of Aquinas, but stresses instead Ockham's acceptance that God usually followed the order he had decided on, comparing Calvin's radical position to the more mitigated, Ockhamite approach to miracles of later scientists like Newton or Boyle (144-5).⁸ Macbeth, according to Poole, longs for Hooker-like order, but finds himself in a Calvinist cosmos.

The particular cosmological properties Poole discusses, whether understood as law or miracle – the binding of the waters, the movements of the sun and moon – will recur throughout the dissertation when discussing the problem of lunar influence. In general, these properties become nearly inevitable metonyms for God's action in the world, for the relationship of divine and human wills, for grace and miracles, for providence and predestination. I will come to suggest too, in my first chapter, that Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* imagines a Hooker-like cosmology, though one not as strictly ordered as Poole or Hooker suggests, but full of the "hiccups" both mention only in passing. But first, as a way of describing the problem more deeply I want to discuss another Calvinist cosmology, one which Poole also discusses in a very different way, the cosmology of *Dr. Faustus*.

3 Unstructurable substance in *Dr. Faustus*

Any theological cosmology has a variety of resources it can use to account for providence: nature, supernatural beings like angels and demons, divine miracles, and preternatural phenomena like occult sympathies and astral forces. Poole has read *Dr. Faustus* as an example of what she calls "Ovidian physics," the popular understanding of a metamorphic universe partly justified by demonology but understood mostly phenomenologically rather than theoretically (25-57). But as Poole observes, the Calvinist cosmology she describes in treating *Macbeth* is equally metamorphic, yet its transformations are carried out by God, not the devil (140-1). Acknowledging that

⁸ For a recent discussion of the complex relationship between medieval voluntarism and early modern science, see Harrison and Henry. Funkenstein provides a lengthier older study.

critical discussions of the end of *Dr. Faustus* are obsessed with the Calvinist theories of predestination at play in Faustus's apparent inability to repent, I want to begin by supplementing Poole's account of *Faustus* by considering Calvinist cosmology's interaction with 16th-century logic and metaphysics.

What phenomenologically looks as Poole has described is also a product of several concurring intellectual problems. On the one hand Calvinist cosmology may be at play in Faustus's repeated desire to transform the cosmos and himself, particularly his closing desire to dissolve into air or water drops, or to undergo metempsychosis. But these metamorphoses are also justified by changes in the other intellectual systems the scholarly Faustus – like the Cambridge MA, Marlowe – was quite familiar with. First among these was the failure of metaphysics, a term whose ambiguous origin in Aristotle led to a traditionally tripartite meaning. Metaphysics could be either (1) the science of being, as opposed to the special sciences treating the parts of being; (2) a “first philosophy” underlying the principles of the special sciences; or (3) a science of divinity (Lohr 537); after Scotus, the third variety was largely the project of Neoplatonic thinkers who used symbolic or mystical methods other than logic.⁹ The second related change was the transformation and partial replacement of Aristotelian logic by humanist dialectic.¹⁰ A third and related trend was the inheritance of medieval nominalism's suspicion about intellectually constraining God's activity – which Poole compares to Calvin's – and therefore achieving any *a priori* knowledge of physical essences.¹¹ Faustus's turn to demons is carefully written as the product and apparent solution to all these trends. For system-building metaphysics' role as “first philosophy” is crucial since it describes the relationship of the disciplines. But in an era of disciplinary change, all Faustus produces in his opening soliloquy is a stew. Before settling on magic, Faustus considers and rejects four subjects in turn: logic, medicine, law, and divinity. Faustus's discussion presents paradoxes within in each subject, and its overall trajectory reveals a

⁹ Lohr (539-584) surveys this tradition.

¹⁰ For overviews of this process, see Mack and Jardine.

¹¹ For an extended consideration of nominalism's influence on modernity, see Gillespie.

failure of metaphysics to mediate disciplinary claims on the substance of human bodies and institutions. His language's inability to achieve any knowledge of essences or substances also suggests a confluence between humanist dialectic and nominalist philosophy.

Initially, Faustus claims to "level at the end of every art" (1.1.4);¹² he views these subjects as practical (rather than theoretical) sciences, which move from desired ends "to discover means and principles by which this end might be attained" (Lohr 630). This end-directed method is inimical to metaphysical mediation between the theoretical sciences (which move from fundamental principles to conclusions) by assigning to each science fundamental principles. Ironically, the first art Faustus discusses is logic, Aristotle's *Analytics*. Dismissively citing the humanist claim that "to dispute well [is] logic's chiefest end" (1.1.8),¹³ he then foregoes logic's role in metaphysics, telling himself to "bid *On kai me on* farewell" (1.1.10) (the tag means "being and not being"). That is, rejecting one use of logic (dialectics) leads Faustus to reject the another, metaphysics, the main intersection of logic with questions of substance. From philosophy he leaps to medicine citing the tag "*ubi desinit philosophus, ibi incipit medicus*" (13).¹⁴ Here Faustus cites Galen as his model, but oddly tells himself to "heap up gold / And be eternised for some wondrous cure," either confusing the end of medicine – "our body's health" (17) – with his own fame and wealth, or hinting at the "wondrous" *aurum potibile* or alchemical contexts of Paracelsan medicine. As with philosophy, two kinds of medicine are conflated, the more modest kind being inadequate for Faustus's aim, and both therefore rejected. The outlandish Paracelsian medical ambition extends to Faustus's desire to "make man to live eternally ... / Or being dead, raise them to life again" (24-25), which leads to his consideration of law. Faustus's quotation of Justinian's law of inheritance, another form of perpetuation of bodies, distorts it, assigning both recipients of a doubly assigned legacy the full value (Bevington and

¹² I cite Bevington and Rasmussen's A-text unless otherwise specified.

¹³ The tag is often attributed to Ramus but appears in many humanist logics, for example Thomas Wilson's *Rule of Reason*, to be discussed shortly.

¹⁴ "Where the philosopher ends, the physician begins."

Rasmussen ed. n. 28-9); like Paracelsian alchemy, even this exaggeration fails to satisfy Faustus: “A pretty case of paltry legacies!” (30). A more rigid view of inheritance lets Faustus shift gears again. “*Exhaereditare filium non potest pater nisi* – “ (“A father cannot disinherit his son unless–“) is another theologically suggestive distortion. Faustus acknowledges this as both “the subject of the Institute / And universal body of the Church,” that is, the canon law built on Justinian (Bevington and Rasmussen ed. n. 36), but the corporeal language of preserving the integrity of the church as well as the Latin *filium* and *pater* suggests the mystical coherence of the church as body of Christ, and Faustus’s danger of spiritual exclusion. But Faustus sees this view as befitting “a mercenary drudge / Who aims at nothing but external trash – / Too servile and illiberal for me;” his pseudo-Protestant craving for an internal life suggests his next subject, divinity. There, avoiding the mystical bodies and spiritual alchemy his surveys have already implicitly rejected, Faustus’s reasoning returns to logic, constructing the devil’s syllogism. Here for once stakes are disembodied, soteriological, abstract, and absolute: we all must sin, and the wages of sin are death. Completing the circle, Faustus’s “*Che sera, sera, / What will be, shall be*” (49-50) tautologically translates, conjugates, and incarnates his “*On kai me on*” (“being and not being”).¹⁵ Brian Cummings has observed of this last part of his speech that Faustus “may be rejecting Calvinism but he has mastered its logic as well as its theology” (*Grammar and Grace* 263-4). But the logical and linguistic gaps in the majority of the speech are unceasingly about the substance of embodiment. Focused on this, after summing up predestination, Faustus jumps ship to the “metaphysics of magicians.”

This is not on the science of being with which the soliloquy opened, with its sly acknowledgment of Aristotelian naturalism’s mortalism, his aim to “live and die in Aristotle’s works” (1.1.5). Rather Faustus turns to magic, in Neoplatonic versions suggesting the possibility of immortal union with God himself; as Faustus concludes, “A sound magician is a mighty god. / Here, Faustus, try thy brains to gain a deity” (64-65).

¹⁵ The modal slip from “will” to “shall” is suggestive of Valla’s critique of scholastic metaphysics and modals, a microcosm of the differing approaches to certainty taken by humanist and scholastic logics (Jardine, “Lorenzo Valla”).

Yet, though many studies of the play's magic have tried to place it within a particular magical tradition, Faustus gains only a devil. The "lines, circles, signs, letters, and characters" (53) of his conjuring ritual and Lohr's Neoplatonic metaphysics are quickly revealed by Mephistopheles to be utterly meaningless. Similarly, while Cornelius's claim that "He that is grounded in astrology, / Enriched with tongues, well seen in minerals / Hath all the principles magic doth require" (1.1.142) replaces metaphysical "principles" with a mystified knowledge of nature, this knowledge never helps Faustus conjure. While the study of occult phenomena was often conceived of as "boundary-work" distinguishing between the demonic and non-demonic (eg. Floyd-Wilson 3-6), Faustus is unconcerned about these boundaries. It is not that Faustus is entirely indifferent to natural knowledge; after selling his soul, among the first things he demands are books of magic spells, astronomy, and botany (2.1.162-179). But Faustus seems suspicious of the books when he gets them.¹⁶ And despite the comic scene of Robin and Rafe's spell casting that follows, Faustus never uses his learning. He simply tells Mephistopheles what to do, and he does it.

But besides being useless, knowledge of cosmology seems fundamentally unsatisfying. In his subsequent scene, Faustus studies the "heavens" (2.3.1) and vows for the first time to repent. When Mephistopheles tries to dissuade him first by arguing that the universe was created for humans, not to testify to God's glory, Faustus insists; but finding himself unable to repent, Faustus explains that he has previously overcome his despair by conjuring classical artistic archetypes – Homer and Amphion – to entertain him, and gives up on repentance momentarily (2.3.1-33). But instead of again conjuring pleasurable artificers, he turns back to a study of the universe, this time demanding from Mephistopheles a disputation on "divine astrology" (2.3.34); he requests a detailed explanation of the substance, order, number, and motion of the cosmic spheres, delving into nuances like the intelligences moving them, their seemingly arbitrary periods, and

¹⁶ Faustus ambiguously responds to Mephistopheles's gift of the books by saying, "O, thou art deceived" (2.1.181). If confessing swindling Mephistopheles, he's premature. If he's talking to himself, he regrets the bargain.

the irregularity of their eclipses and conjunctions.¹⁷ Mephistopheles's trite answers prompt Faustus to exclaim in frustration, "well, I am answered!" and revert to questioning Mephistopheles on natural theology: "who made the world?" (66). Denied the aesthetic pleasures of legible form and substance, telos and origin must supply meaning. But Lucifer soon appears to scare Faustus out of this second movement to penance; he offers a masque of the seven deadly sins, who appear in allegorical splendour, what Lucifer calls their "proper shapes" (102), and informs Faustus as to their "several names and dispositions" (108-10). Partly by virtue of this technical language of shape and disposition, the seven sins have formally replaced the seven planets.¹⁸ Faustus has been the victim of a bait-and-switch, but he doesn't really mind. Mephistopheles began by arguing that heaven was "not half so fair as thou / Or any man that breathes on earth / ... it was made for man; therefore is man more excellent" (4-9). But Faustus acknowledges that the masque "will be as pleasing unto me as paradise was to Adam the first day of his creation" (104); because they provide superior aesthetic pleasures, knowledge of the sins has replaced not only questions of telos, but Adam's natural knowledge altogether.

The scene ends with Lucifer promising to give Faustus a tour of Hell, but we next see Wagner describing Faustus's return to astronomy as a celestial voyage phrased in entirely mythological terms of "scaling Olympus's top" in a chariot drawn by dragons.¹⁹ Like the juxtaposition of sins and planets, a tour of Hell and one of the heavens, the juxtaposition of myths and technical descriptions poses the question of which cosmological fables we are to doubt, and which believe. On the other hand, cosmology and soteriology may be essentially incommensurable. The first piece of knowledge Faustus learns from Mephistopheles is that Hell is "within the bowels of these elements / Where we are tortured and remained for ever. / Hell hath no limits, nor is circumscribed,

¹⁷ Calling this wide range of concerns "astrology" is consistent with Westman's argument.

¹⁸ The Neoplatonic myth of the "soul journey," associating the spheres with the sins, underwrites this substitution.

¹⁹ The B-text adds to this a technical description of the path of his voyage; there are slight differences in the texts' cosmologies.

/ In one self place, for where we are is hell, / And where hell is must we ever be” (2.1.122-126). This incommensurability is ironically already implied by Faustus’s earlier indifference to cosmic structure: “I charge thee wait upon me whilst I live / To do whatever Faustus shall command, / Be it to make the moon drop from her sphere / Or the ocean to overwhelm the world” (1.3.128). By invoking the tides, Calvin’s central figure for divine activity constantly enforcing the natural order, right next to the moon, whose influence over the tides offers a more distinctly naturalistic theory, Faustus is again telegraphing the ontological indifference of his demonological desires. Mephistopheles replies to Faustus that he can only do what Lucifer permits; by implicating Lucifer’s restraint in turn by God, this passage directly imbricates Faustus’s near arbitrary demonology with the Calvinist sense of cosmic order sustained by the divine will. It also tells us exactly why Faustus finds cosmology unsatisfying; even as a proof of God’s power, it demonstrates only an arbitrary structure that exceeds the grasp of Faustus’s human reason.

But Faustus’s turn to the aesthetic pleasures of art is not only the product of his weak reason, or its failure to produce an adequate metaphysics. In describing the universe as less beautiful than Faustus or any other human, Mephistopheles constructs an appeal to Faustus’s pride that is incompatible with his sense of superiority to other humans. The play traces Faustus’s increasing isolation, even after his return to Wittenberg near the end of the play, which is partly a product of his intentional rejection of friendship and equality among scholars or magicians and more obviously among his servants. But partly too, Faustus seems all too aware of human faction and contention, whether among scholars in the university, between Pope and Emperor, among courtiers, or between rabble and the nobility.²⁰ Given the ugly inevitability of faction, the humanist solidarity of Mephistopheles’s appeal falls flat.

Compared to the failure of his other relationships, Faustus’s attempt to marry is particularly interesting for the way it mixes problems of demonology, dialectic, and

²⁰ Consider especially the B-text version of the Vanholt scene.

aesthetics with questions of substance. Responding to Mephistopheles's claim that he is in Hell, Faustus scoffs: "Nay, an this be hell, / I'll willingly be damned here. What? Walking, disputing, etc.?" (2.1.142). Faustus describes his current situation as that of the archetypal peripatetic philosopher; in the B-text the more general activities of non-philosopher humans are added, sleeping and eating. Faustus then appears to change the subject: "But leaving off this, let me have a wife, the fairest maid in Germany, for I am wanton and lascivious and cannot live without a wife" (2.1.143-4). Faustus seems to be alluding to a textbook example of topical invention, the dialectical generation of arguments. In the most popular dialectic textbook in England, Thomas Wilson's *Rule of Reasons*, the only fully worked example of topical invention is whether a priest should marry. Wilson's influential model, Rudolph Agricola, instead treats the related question of whether a *philosopher* should take a wife (Mack, *Elizabethan* 67-8, 78; *History* 58-65). Wilson's polemically Reformed update of this philosophical chestnut is unabashedly affirmative.

Agricola's and Wilson's examples understand substance strikingly differently. Topical invention involves lists of "possible relations between objects and qualities in the world" including definition, genus, species, property, whole, parts, activity, content, matter, form, efficient cause, final cause, etc. (Mack, *Elizabethan Rhetoric* 67). Agricola's example connects the philosopher's defining concern for virtue with the production of (virtuously educated) children, a defining term of "wife" (Mack, *Elizabethan Rhetoric* 67-8). Whereas Agricola treats philosophers and wives as substantially embodied, Wilson, while preserving women's embodiment, treats priests as mere vessels of the Word or Holy Spirit, creatures of pure rhetoric. For example, Wilson's "partes" of a priest are "to invent matter out of the Scripture, according to the aptnesse of his hearers, to deck his doings handsomely, to place his sentences in order, to remember what he speaketh, and to utter his wordes distinctly, plainly, and with loude voice" (57); his "matter" is "the word of God, the old Testament and the new;" his "forme" is "the conversation, speech, spirit, or the manner of the preacher's living." Yet Wilson's eventual argument acknowledges a carnality never addressed by his topics of invention. From the definition of a preacher as desiring to live virtuously, Wilson presents an

overloaded syllogism revealing hidden assumptions: “Whosoever desireth to live vertuously, desireth to avoid fornication. Whosoever desireth to avoyde fornication, and can not obtaine it by praier, or otherwise (as to all men it is not given) the same persone desireth marriage. *Ergo*, whosoever desireth to live vertuously, desireth marriage” (59).

Faustus’s self-definition as a philosopher is an irreligious one like Agricola’s, but his acknowledgement of his lasciviousness parodies Paul’s advice that “it is better to marry than to burn” (1 Cor. 7:9), the scriptural license for priestly marriage (the scholarly Faustus is “a divine in show” (1.1.3) after all). Yet Mephistopheles chides that “marriage is but a ceremonial toy;” when Faustus rejects the devil he offers as “a hot whore” (2.1.153), Mephistopheles promises him “fairest courtesans” every morning. Like Faustus’s own ambiguous identity and redundant words “wanton and lascivious,” the semantic ambiguities of words like “wife,” “whore,” “courtesan,” “mistress,” and “maid” blur and blend in these scenes, undermining the possibility of the linguistic certainty Wilson pays lip-service to in his manual.²¹

After his failure to receive a wife Faustus demands his cosmological books, and we have seen how he abandons them for the aesthetic pleasures of sin. So it is fitting that at the end of the play Faustus falls in love with an aesthetic artifact, Helen of Troy. Whereas his first demand for a wife parodies humanist dialectic’s ineptness at handling substance, his ravishing by Helen presents humanist art’s mysteriously insubstantial power. The scenes are structurally paired, Helen appearing when Faustus finally returns to Wittenburg and signs his contract for a second time. Compared to his perplexing but implicit rationale for a wife, this scene amplifies Faustus’s desire for redemption. Initially despairing of his ability to repent, the Old Man’s claim to see the newly invisible good angel anoint him with a vial of grace momentarily strengthens him; even after renewing the contract, Mephistopheles admits that Faustus’s “faith is great. I cannot touch his soul / But what I may afflict his body with / I will attempt, which is but little worth” (5.1.79-81). But the Old Man’s testimony, like a teleological cosmology, isn’t a

²¹ Robin continues this parody in the next scene; his “mistress,” like the topical wife’s telos, is “born to bear with me, or else my art fails” (2.3.19).

sufficiently pleasing visible sign of grace. Faustus renews his fidelity to Lucifer by asking for the beautiful Helen. “Here will I dwell, for heaven be in these lips / And all is dross that is not Helena” (5.1.96-7) he adoringly exclaims. Faustus supplements Mephistopheles’s claim that hell is in the bowels of the elements with the argument that art is heaven and everything else is shit.

While reading Helen as a symbol for the seductive power of literature is conventional now, an older trend in criticism, preoccupied with discovering the moment of Faustus’s irrevocable damnation, suggested locating it here under the rubric of demoniality, sex with demons.²² Reading the scene beside Faustus’s request for a wife, the myths of succubi and demonic offspring recall the textbook justifications of marriage, avoiding fornication and producing children. But children are not what Faustus wants here; his please “Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss” (5.1.93) is teasingly vague, like his desire for immortality in his opening soliloquy. Indeed, an aesthetic immortality may be all that Faustus can hope for, given the play’s repeated conflations of fertility and excrementality, for example in its horse-trading and barnyard scenes. Any material contribution Faustus could make to a marriage falls under this excremental rubric. Again, “all is dross that is not Helena” (5.1.96-7) he adoringly exclaims; his potential children are dross, and potentially he is too.

While the opening soliloquy treats human substance in general, from the beginning of the play Faustus’s own substance is itself a theme. The play’s prologue observes his transplantation from parents “base of stock” to “the fruitful plot of scholarism” in his “riper years,” but juxtaposes these images of natural growth and artificial transplantation with a fatal excess, a “swollen ... cunning of a self-conceit” and gluttonous “surfeit” on necromancy, itself phrased as the failure of Daedalian *techne*, the “waxen wings” that “did mount above his reach.” Soon afterward Wagner will tease the scholars seeking Faustus by asking, “is not he *corpus naturale*? And is not that *mobile*?” (1.2.20-21) and telling them to use their eyes; the wine bottle he carries should allow them to deduce that

²² cp. Warren for a summary of the debate. In the *English Faust Book* Faustus’s second contract rules out any future conversion (167).

he is at dinner. The tenuous differences between theoretical and empirical knowledge of Faustus's substance, and between natural and artificial modifications of it, introduce the play. The problem of Faustus's substance matters not only for his supposed demoniality, but also for his ability to sign a demonic contract. Most experts denied the possibility of demonic offspring because of the material differences between spirits and human beings; Scot in his debunking of the witchcraft contract went even further, asking, "what *firm* bargains can be made betwixt a carnall bodie and a spirituall?" (qtd. in L. Wilson, 198-9). The less skeptical demonic contract tradition held that the sorcerer always planned to outwit the devil either through trickery or last-minute repentance, and in comic theatre he usually succeeded (Johnston). Faustus's attempts at repentance appeal to the latter strategy, though he always fails. I want to suggest that the former strategy is at play in a particularly materialist way when Faustus proposes to turn himself into a spirit.²³

Indeed, the very first condition in the contract is an explicit request for Faustus's own demonic transubstantiation: "First, that Faustus may be a spirit in form and substance" (2.1.97). Compared to the looser and conventional clause that Faustus will define Mephistopheles's "form and shape" (104-5), his self-description in Aristotelian hylomorphic terms suggest the exclusion of a separate soul. The contract's final reiteration is particularly problematic: "I, John Faustus of Wittenberg, Doctor, by these presents, do give both body and soul to Lucifer, Prince of the East, and his minister Mephistopheles; and furthermore grant unto them that four-and-twenty years being expired, the articles above written inviolate, full power to fetch or carry the said John Faustus, body and soul, flesh, blood, or goods, into their habitation wheresoever" (106-112). It is possible to deconstruct the hyperspecific language of this contrast in many different ways: Is Faustus the same Faustus if he is transubstantiated? How can the grant apply to both Lucifer and Mephistopheles? Where is the devil's habitation? But I want to stress the terminological bait-and-switch between the grant and the first condition, which must remain "inviolate" for the grant to be valid; Faustus, being "a spirit in form

²³ This term has been surprisingly little discussed in recent criticism, but cp. Manley and more recently Johnston. Demonic transformation was common, but the conjuror's transformation a minority opinion. cp. King James VI 19-23.

and substance” will no longer have soul, flesh, or blood to be given. Faustus multiplies terms in the grant to muddy the waters (or sweeten the deal), but also because he believes the terms of the contract are materially inconsistent.²⁴ If transubstantiation is possible, there will be no soul left to take; if it is impossible, the contract is void.²⁵ Wagner observes at the beginning of act 5 the dissonance between Faustus’s grant to him of “all his goods,” suggesting his immanent death, and Faustus’s carousing. Since “all his goods” have already been promised to Lucifer, a simple explanation is that Faustus is up to his old legal tricks, trying to swindle the devil out of his property and save himself from damnation by willing everything over to Wagner instead.²⁶

Whatever the reality of this transubstantiation, though Faustus’s magic tricks sometimes involve distortions of his body (for example his severable leg), he never quite fulfills his opening desire to move the moon or drown the continents. Near the end of the play Faustus accordingly finds himself subject to a cosmology that, though structurally meaningless, still has a rigid temporal structure calling his contract due:

Ah, Faustus, Now hast thou but one bare hour to live.
And then thou must be damned perpetually.
Stand still, you ever-moving spheres of heaven,
That time may cease and midnight never come!
Fair nature’s eye, rise, rise again, and make
Perpetual day; or let this hour be but
A year, a month, a week, a natural day
That Faustus may repent and save his soul! (5.2.66-73)

Begging for a miracle like that at Gibeon or a hermeneutic accommodation of temporal units,²⁷ Faustus sees the inevitable approach.²⁸ Yet suddenly the cosmos which have seemed meaningless or damning offer Faustus a sign: “Christ’s blood stream[ing] in the

²⁴ Johnston offers several alternative readings of the contract’s inconsistency (33-4).

²⁵ The *Faust Book* is quite clear that Faustus intends to use the contractual terms to avoid damnation (Jones 95-97).

²⁶ “Fraudulent conveyance” was a hot Elizabethan topic. cp. Ross.

²⁷ cp. accommodations of chronologies in Genesis.

²⁸ Poole (48-49) observes the tension between at this moment between a rigid and a metamorphic cosmos.

firmament” (5.2.78). But before Faustus can call on Christ, this vision becomes a wrathful God who “stretcheth out his arm and bends his ireful brows” (5.2.83).

Faustus reverts to a series of corporeal distortions. First he mixes fertility with excrementality again, juxtaposing the astral determination of his birth with a desire for an excremental treatment of his body that will liberate his soul:

You stars that reigned at my nativity
Whose influence hath allotted death and hell,
Now draw up Faustus like a foggy mist
Into the entrails of yon labouring cloud,
That when you vomit forth into the air,
My limbs may issue from your smoky mouths,
So that my soul may but ascend to heaven. (5.2.89-95)

Though phrased as a secondary birth from a cloud, the excremental vomiting of the body suggests the impossibility of the soul’s ascent as a temporally impossible reversal of natal astral influence. For one brief moment astrology matters, but Faustus mentions it only to undo it in a search for other forms of causation and continuity. Praying for a Pythagorean metempsychosis into an animal or the mortality of animal souls, Faustus curses his parents for engendering him, then himself, then Lucifer, and finally lands on what is almost a prayer (or conjuration) for another transubstantiation:

Now body, turn to air,
Or Lucifer will bear thee quick to hell.
O soul, be changed into waterdrops,
And fall into the ocean, ne’er to be found!
My God, my God, look not so fierce on me! (5.2.116-120)

This ending on the figure of waterdrops dispersed in the ocean is probably not a coincidental recalling of Calvin’s miraculist understanding of God’s control over the tides and rain. But as Calvin argues, like raindrops, God also controls the motion of the will, including Faustus’s failure to repent.

The end of the play then suggests that Faustus’s paradox is analyzable as the tension between Calvin’s miraculism or a near-occasionalist understanding of the universe and his followers’ stress on predestination (Poole, *Supernatural* 151). Though Faustus

temporarily blames astral influence, his parents who bore him, himself, and Lucifer, his miraculist understanding of the universe eventually blames God's failure to intervene to effect his repentance. In a voluntarist universe that can have any structure whatsoever, the desire for demonological control over that structure makes some sense. But in questions of the will, of repentance, and salvation, the play and *Faustus* make only a half-turn to God; we stop, blaming God for his fierceness.

4 *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: lunar influence and Hooker's defence of ritual

If *Faustus* dramatizes Calvinist cosmology, my first chapter treats *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as a cosmology based on the theology of Richard Hooker. Rather than the tragedy *Faustus* locates in the paradoxical mixture of voluntarism and predestination, *Midsummer* is a comedy grounded in Hooker's assumption of God's rationality expressed as love and the enabling of creaturely virtue (Spinks 111-112). For Hooker the universe is structured according to a hierarchy of laws, including the laws of reason, nature, and scripture; crucially, ritual practice is embedded in these general laws and is part of the ordinary functioning of the universe. This universe, therefore, is anything but arbitrary. Following Peter Lake's analysis of the trends within the Elizabethan church Hooker was responding to, particularly a Calvinist stress on predestination and a quietist approach to ritual practice (Lake 145-6), I begin by locating these trends in the interference of Duke Theseus and Egeus, sovereign and father, with the marriage plans of the young lovers Hermia and Lysander. This reading is possible because the play frames the problems of marriage and love as metonyms for the problems of free will, predestination, and grace in relationship to religious ritual.

This reading of Athenian patriarchy pits a Calvinist political theology against the natural world outside Athens and the play's enchanted fairies. The "hiccups" Poole alludes to in Hooker's theorization of natural law generate the metaphysical structure of the play; the most prominent hiccups are fertility's uncertain relationship to lunar influence and the fairies' unpredictable magic. The fairies are partly legible as theatrical allegorizations of natural processes, but their chaotic agency and appeal to higher powers makes them more than that. Against the natural or astral determinism that *Faustus* attacks in his final scene,

the natural world of *Midsummer* is decidedly irregular; yet whereas the arbitrariness of cosmic structure made it meaningless for Faustus, the constrained unpredictability of nature in *Midsummer* creates its significance. By making love and fertility unpredictable but not completely arbitrary the play suggests they may be read as visible signs of grace, an extension of the traditional definition of the sacraments. Marriage's reformation from sacrament to institution and the complex echoes of its sacramental origin still present in English custom and law make marriage the ideal test-case for a Hookerian understanding of ritual's relationship to nature.

Ritual is therefore one way *Midsummer*'s fairies can be distinguished from *Faustus*'s metaphysical demons. The fairies are located in space and time and sometimes act through evidently natural means (their love-potions have precise floral origins). But though their internal arguments can ramify into natural disorder, they do not cause this disorder directly. Instead Titania's speech culminating in the anger of "the moon, governess of floods" (2.1.103) describes natural disorder's inextricable but obscurely acausal connection to disturbances of both human and fairy rituals. In other words, this particular occasion of natural order is only a large-scale case of a more general ambiguity in the functioning of ritual, which, like nature, only sometimes works as intended. Along with the fairies' awareness of higher levels of existence – for example in their allusions to Venus and Cupid – their own dependance on unpredictable ritual expresses the limitations of fairy power. Whereas in *Faustus* ritual, *pace* the neoplatonist magicians, was meaningless ceremony, in *Midsummer* meaningful but unreliable ritual is everywhere.

While the fairies may offer something of an explanation for human ritual, their own use of ritual with its own unpredictable results means that their explanatory power is only partial. They cannot therefore be considered as merely theatrical allegories; their one moment of frame-breaking, the metamorphosis of Bottom, is the exception or Hookerian "hiccup" which proves the rule.²⁹ Though this metamorphosis and other aspects of the

²⁹ cp. Strier, "Shakespeare and the Skeptics" 178-180. Strier, though cautious, relegates Bottom's transformation to "theatrical fiction" (180).

fairies are Ovidian, they are in Ovidian in different sense than *Faustus*'s demons. In other words, the phenomenology Poole describes can apply equally well to both plays, but with quite different metaphysical or theological underpinnings. In particular, *Faustus*'s tension between predestination and voluntarism can be accommodated by *Midsummer*'s treatment of ritual. Because fairy ritual in *Midsummer* is only partly predictable, it can accommodate the tension Nicholas Tyacke has identified between Calvinists and anti-Calvinists over the relationship between predestinatory and sacramental grace. Fairies are agents of both nature and grace, but though they can directly affect the will (like *Faustus*'s God but unlike *Faustus*'s demons) with their love-potions they can preserve both apparent human and divine freedom by virtue of their unpredictability.

While the play locates its understanding of natural irregularity primarily in the moon and fertility, and uses natural irregularity to theorize how rituals can be partly efficacious, it also considers how ritual can be used to tame social discord. I argue that the play tempers its Hookerian understanding of ritual efficacy with a Pauline treatment of religious *adiaphora* (things indifferent to scripture) that associates different attitudes towards ritual practice with different degrees of spiritual maturity. While examples are distributed throughout the play, the most striking are the heterogeneous responses to the mechanicals' performance of *Pyramus and Thisbe*. Through a series of allusions to controversies over ritual practice and the myth's own Christianization in the Ovid *moralisé* tradition, the play-within-a-play presents theatre as a form of religious ritual which, due to general uncertainty about ritual efficacy, can be at once sacramental or merely edifying to various participants – as long as it avoids giving offense. But the truly spiritual, the play suggests following St. Paul's elaboration of Christian liberty, are not offended so easily; they can interpret away potentially misleading material signs when necessary.

In an ideologically complex strategy of compensation, the play suggests that its female characters (human women or gendered fairies) are in this sense generally spiritually superior to its males, and that this spirituality may help them endure the offenses associated with their social subordination. The play therefore adopts the quietist view of Christian

liberty which defines freedom with respect to ritual practice while preserving the subjugation of women and servants. Yet this spirituality also allows women, as they mature, to transcend the narcissistic desire for material likeness evident in the intense, near-identification of Hermia and Helena, and to accept more substantial differences in their older friendships – for example that of Titania and her Indian votaress, a friendship between a fairy queen and her mortal servant. Unlike Faustus’s intense homonormativity, narcissism, and desire for transubstantiation, the superior “spirituality” of the women in *Midsummer* is not a question of their substance, but, again following St. Paul, a question of their attitude towards ritual and society, manifesting in a superior capacity for friendship.

Again, in the play’s treatment of the social role of ritual, Bottom’s “translation” is the exception that proves the rule. Bottom’s humility and eventual restoration to his human shape contrasts with Faustus’s alignment of transubstantiation and an antisocial desire for uniqueness. Bottom’s theatrical impulse, however inept, is towards charity and social unity. Bottom views the aesthetic constructs of the theatre as socially salutary rituals that even in misfiring are controlled by a theological discourse that allows offense to be interpreted away. This understanding of art is incompatible with *Faustus*’s view of it as an aesthetic distraction from invisible grace or inevitable damnation; theatre in *Midsummer* is either easily neutralizable or edifying, if not sacramental. This understanding of theatre is possible because its efficacy (like all ritual, according to Hooker) is metonymically linked with lunar influence through their common effects on the imagination. Puck and Oberon’s verbal juxtapositions of fruitfulness and imagination when discussing the lovers’ dream-like experience in the woods, and again in the epilogue discussing the audience’s experience in the theatre, presents these two domains of experience as fungible. In both cases, these pseudo-dramatists aim to contain the negative feelings produced by bad or offensive ritual by simply interpreting them away as dreams. Rather than Faustus’s polarization of art against excrementality, in *Midsummer* artistic ritual, when misfiringly infertile, is at worst inoffensively neutral.

Midsummer thus is legible as a local response to Calvinist cosmology, which works by partly reversing the nominalist/voluntarist uncertainties that motivate Faustus; it

reconstructs a meaningful cosmology.³⁰ Yet the overt nostalgia of its fairies, in particular their evocation of a recent Catholic past (Buccola), masks their embodiment of Hooker's contemporary revival of Aristotelian and Neoplatonic ideas; the play is legible as either backward- or forward-looking almost precisely in the same way that Hooker is.³¹ In a recent historiographical review of Max Weber's thesis of the Reformation's "disenchantment of the world," Alexandra Walsham argues for more local attention to processes of "desacralization and resacralization" ("Reformation"); comparison of these two plays can help make Walsham's point. In *Faustus*, in a supposedly strictly Calvinist universe, demons are (equally supposedly) all-powerful and unbound by natural laws; in *Midsummer*, a much less Calvinist work, fairies are everywhere but identified with a precariously regular nature. Calling one play more or less enchanted is almost beside the point. The two plays were written within a decade of each other, and the main trends prompting Hooker's work seem to have to do with English church politics of the 1590s (Lake), and perhaps a concurrent Aristotelian revival in philosophy (Schmitt); both opposed Weber's cruder trendline.

But despite these more general motivations, the metaphysical intricacy of *Midsummer*'s solution is its source of vulnerability. In the play's cosmology the moon and its influence over the humours of the body and the waters of the earth become a metonym for the way grace and nature work together. The irregularity of this connection, for *Faustus* a weakness, is in *Midsummer* turned into a strength, licensing ritual forms of social cohesion. But the moon's availability as a cosmological and social linchpin was soon to dramatically change.

5 *The Duchess of Malfi*: lunar surveying and affective antimaterialism

The first reaction to the lunar observations I study is John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*. In chapter 2, I argue that the play generally accepts the lunar observations and

³⁰ The historiography of nominalism/voluntarism and its relationship to the Reformation is more complicated than I allow. See eg. Blumenberg, Gillespie, Cummings *Grammar and Grace*.

³¹ For a discussion of Hooker's Neoplatonism, see Kirby, *Richard Hooker*.

reads them as strong evidence for a universe devoid of occult sympathies and influences; moreover, the universe seems *almost* completely devoid of supernatural interference, whether of demons or of God.

Yet the play works hard to reach this conclusion, recreating the lunar observations in the quite different terms of its tragic plot. I begin by describing how the play subtly dramatizes the process of surveying the moon by using the concepts and imagery of the lunar observations to articulate the plot's overt investigation of women. While the play's metaphorical translation between the surfaces and substances of the moon and women is licensed by theories of lunar influence over women's bodies, the disenchanting conclusion of the lunar investigations throws this license into doubt. Moreover, the new post-Keplerian theories of vision, involving the elimination of visual *species* bearing occult (and potentially lunar) influences, reinforce a sense of epistemic uncertainty and disenchantment.³² In other words, what begins as a metonym, as in *Midsummer*, ends up as a broken metaphor. As a result, the unstable epistemic and visual assumptions of the lunar investigations are juxtaposed with the misogynist assumptions of the investigation of women, grounding both not in metaphysical or theological certainties but in practical skepticism and dirty court politics.

Moreover, these investigations reveal a series of misogynist ethical double standards. The male investigators in the play, Ferdinand and Bosola, are prosecutors; they repeatedly attack women for deceitful inconstancy, usually marked as a form of hysteria, sexual or emotional incontinence linked to uterine disease and lunar influence. Men justify their own deceitfulness under the rubric of Neostoic constancy, an emotional and epistemic impermeability serving practical political ends, reflecting the popularity of Neostoic thought in England after the 1590s.³³ In one sense the male characters dramatize Richard Tuck's description of the "new humanism" combining Tacitean politics, Neostoic theory, and philosophical skepticism, and flesh out some of Tuck's arguments about the connection between the abandonment of virtue ethics and new

³² I discuss visual theory in more detail in chapter 2. See eg. Clark, *Vanities*.

³³ See McCrea for a survey of Neostoic thought in England and its discontents from the 1590s onward.

theories of vision and non-essentialist physics. But the play ultimately constructs a theological and affective critique of Neostoicism. While Charles Taylor has argued for Neostoicism's centrality in the 17th-century phase of secularization, providing a new sense of a "buffered self" free of impinging external forces which can work to achieve human good in the world, the play presents a much darker view. Its denouement presents Neostoicism as a kind of madness, a male melancholy equivalent to a newly psychologized female hysteria.³⁴ In Taylor's terms, the epistemic buffering of Keplerian vision and the suppression of moral feeling counteract any activist benefits of a physical buffering.

Yet, despite accusations of hysteria, the women in the play are better able to balance the new moral philosophies of Neostoicism and Neoepicureanism with a morally salutary deference to their feelings. *The Duchess* handles gender in a similar way to *Midsummer*, then, in presenting women's capacity for feeling as a counterbalance to male misogyny, though this feeling is newly uncoupled from occult influences. The play also presents women's feeling as a mark of spiritual superiority, though its consolations are even more limited than in *Midsummer*. The Duchess in particular has a moment of religious conversion, marked as rejection of Neostoic consolations or contempt for the world, which enables her to accept both her attachments to the world and a particularly Protestant form of anti-materialist spirituality. Yet the Duchess's spiritual feelings only emerge in her captivity, and merely ease her through her inevitable death. They have only faint echoes of the socially productive or edifying quality of the female friendships in *Midsummer*.

Indeed the play's presentation of the male world of politics, service, and friendship repeatedly plays with the Renaissance discourses of friendship, using the play's philosophical movement with Galileo towards a theory of matter without qualities to undercut any possibility of friendship, service, or love based on essential likeness. In this way the men in the play are like Faustus; their ambition may temporarily preclude

³⁴ cp. Gowland, who argues for Robert Burton's similar analysis of Neosticism as a kind of melancholy in the *Anatomy*.

friendship, but so do deeper substantive grounds. Though the plot dramatizes a weakening of all secular relationships of love, service, or friendship, which become only incompletely calculable through newer ideas of interest, the play's movement towards an affective rather than substantive understanding of love suggests a glimmer of hope.

This hope is particularly tied up with the play's stress on religious feeling. Though not particularly Calvinist, the play's setting in Italy on the eve of Reformation and anti-clerical tone give it a generally Protestant stance. The play contains several rich explorations of affective responses to images despite their material inertness. Similarly, the emotionally vivid details of the Duchess's conversion, which involves a subtle rejection of the Catholic system of indulgences and martyrdom, and the similarly gripping failure of Ferdinand and Bosola to accomplish the penance and justice they desire, except as revenge, are all written in particularly anti-materialist terms. Together these explorations of religious feeling suggest that Protestantism provides the theological resources to cope with the double disenchantments of the lunar observations and the new politics.

Therefore, as an example of the resacralizations Walsham describes, the sphere of supernatural activity in the play moves, as far as we can tell, to the realm of feeling. The world of the play seems mostly devoid of demons or miracles; demons are suggested only in passing and in association with melancholic delusions. The one or two suggestions of providential interference are similarly confined to private, potentially salutary visions. This movement may reflect the developing theological topic of the "discernment of spirits,"³⁵ in which affective and moral criteria rather than scientific ones were often determinative in discerning between spiritual experiences due to God or the Devil. Yet for practical purposes the play presents this movement as moot; men repeatedly fail to operationalize it in practice, and women only do so in their dying moments.

³⁵ See, eg. Copeland and Machielson, Schreiner, Sluhovsky.

6 *The Tempest's* covenantal materialism

In chapter 3, I present *The Tempest* as a partial solution to *The Duchess's* paradoxical mixture of disenchanted physics and Protestant affective spirituality offering no guides in the world of post-Machiavellian politics. Politically and theologically, *The Tempest's* solutions are predicated on a greater faith in both divine providence and worldly monarchs; however this faith is used, at least nominally, to constrain rather than provide unlimited license to the worldly action of kings and deities.

To begin, I show how the assertion and discernment of providential action is central to the play's discussions of political legitimacy. Confronted by an apparently materialist world like that of *The Duchess*, the play dramatizes attempts to build up politics and ethics from materialist principles, particularly through the resurrected philosophies of Stoicism and Epicureanism.³⁶ But, the play argues, these philosophies are powerless to account for a Christian providence. The dramatization of this failure mostly involves the pranks Ariel plays on the Neapolitans and rebels; since Ariel is a spirit, this naturally suggests that for *The Tempest* the discernment of providence centrally involves the discernment of spirits.

Like *The Duchess*, however, the *Tempest* suggests that discernment is not concerned with the substantive distinction between angels and demons. Unlike *The Duchess*, here spiritual beings, Ariel and his cohort, run around on stage. Yet these spiritual beings are definitively material – Ariel is an “airy spirit” – and are interpreted by different factions at different times as angelic and demonic. In essence, they are morally neutral. Moreover, though Ariel returns to nature at the end of the play, unlike the fairies of *Midsummer* he spends most of play the carrying out magical, if not miraculous, violations of nature. And unlike the devils of *Faustus*, Ariel's relationship with Prospero is modelled on an employment contract which, though stretched, is never broken.

³⁶ In twinning these philosophies in my discussion of *The Duchess* and *The Tempest* I follow Reid Barbour's study of their significance in Stuart religious and political thought, *English Epicures and Stoics*.

Given the topicality in 1611 of King James' recent failure to reach a settlement with Parliament framed as a "great contract,"³⁷ and Victoria Kahn's study of the 17th-century development of contractual thinking in informing theories of political obligation (*Wayward Contracts*), I read the contractualism of the play as a framing cosmological principle spanning covenant theology, marriage, and politics. The contracting subjects in the play are not the theoretical independently consenting equals of liberal contract theory; for one, they may be coerced, or subtly materially influenced. The play backs off from the affectively and epistemically isolated "buffered selves" of the skeptical Neostoics in *The Duchess*; Ariel and his cohort replace lunar influence with the material influence of the air, which is able to directly affect the humours and passions, for example in Ferdinand's musical calming after his shipwreck. Yet unlike *Midsummer*, Prospero's spirit magic can never directly affect the will of its victims, preserving a domain of voluntarism for the subject. The treatment of affect in the play is accordingly much more complex than in either *Midsummer* or *The Duchess*. Feelings, whether simple pleasure or pain, or more complex aesthetic responses, can appear as tokens in political contracts or theories of political obligation, complicating attempts at the affective discernment of spirits by conflating spiritual and political languages of obligation.

Yet I suggest that the play presents a possible criterion for spiritual discernment in a particular pattern of experience which exceeds political theories of obligation. Extending David Evett's work on the play's thematics of willing bondage, I suggest the play presents a model for discernment in the Christian spiritual experience of the imitation of Christ's suffering and resurrection, phrased in the gospel terms of the "sign of Jonah" (Mt 12:24ff, 16:1-4; Lk 29ff), Christ's own criterion of discernment. This models the way apparently coercive and painful obligations can transform in time to the experience of freedom, friendship, or love. It also models the way the play's contracts can be understood as legitimate despite inequalities between the contracting parties. The marriage of Ferdinand and Miranda is the central example of eventually consenting

³⁷ See eg. Hamilton 44ff.

contract between very different individuals, whether that difference is marked by gender or different degrees of worldliness or sophistication, aesthetic or political.

Therefore, unlike the skepticism of *Dr Faustus* or *The Duchess* about the possibility of relationships between beings of different substances or statuses, *The Tempest* grounds its politics in a theologically central paradigm of relationships between unequals. Yet it does so, I argue, without essentializing substance as *The Duchess* is wont to do. As Prospero's famous "revels speech" suggests, human substance and perhaps cosmic substance is not characterized by the mechanical ugliness of *The Duchess* or the meaningless excrementality of *Faustus*; instead, it is "the stuff that dreams are made on." The vagueness of the phrase reflects uncertainty about the ultimate constituents of physical reality. By aligning cosmological contingency with the aesthetic construction of Prospero's spirit masque, the play redeems the aesthetic power of human creation. Yet human power and divine power are carefully balanced by covenantal understandings. Read in a Galilean context, the play's lunar references appeal to the very same examples cited by Poole in her discussion of Calvin – the miracle at Gibeon, control over the tides – but do so in a way that reflects covenantal theology's understanding of nature as a covenantal order temporarily transgressible in service of other divine covenants – either of nation, as in the case of Gibeon, or individual salvation, as in the case of Christ.

The politics of artifice this way extends to the cosmos, making the world lovable (*pace Faustus*) by making humans partners in its creation. Moreover the transformation of covenants in the play reveal an awareness of theories of biblical accommodation, the way in which biblical cosmologies and promises are expressed in language suitable for the developing understanding of human beings over time. If Sycorax can control the tides and Prospero can dim the sun, Caliban must first learn their names and, later, learn that Stephano is not really the man in the moon. In this way the cosmological implications of Galileo's observations, whether the Copernicanism against which the miracle at Gibeon was often cited, or the undermining of lunar influence, can be theologically absorbed. The understanding of the universe as a covenantal order subject to adjustment and accommodation but premised on a reciprocal relationship between God and humans is a kind of middle ground between Hooker's cosmology and Calvin's. To some extent the

arbitrary acts of will underlying covenants cannot be understood rationally, and the possibilities of miracles carried out by the Ariels residual in nature cannot be ruled out. But on the other hand, covenants, even accommodated ones, mean that neither the constant miraculism of Calvin nor the predestination of Calvinism need be invoked.

This covenantal understanding extends to the play's treatment of human fertility, which, through Miranda's marriage, models the effects of both political and theological contracts. Though Miranda's marriage is influenced by her father, it is not coerced; while other characters in the play suggest rape or various lunar meddlings, he makes no attempt to directly control Miranda's fertility as in *Midsummer* or *The Duchess*. Similarly, the wedding masque's hopes for Miranda and Ferdinand's offspring are looser and less constraining than *Midsummer*'s blessing of the beds. In this way *The Tempest*'s treatment of fertility, like its understanding of grace, is temporally limited to a single generation; each generation requires its own covenantal renewals, political and theological.

7 Science and secularization?

To conclude this introduction, I will survey some of the dissertation's potential contributions to broader secularization stories. Though it is only a small set of case studies of works of literature only indirectly related to each other, the examples' complications of chronologies and introductions of idiosyncrasies may be productive.

One place to start, since it has been particularly influential in theories of secularization, is the topic of political theology. Made popular with reference to Carl Schmitt's argument that all major modern political concepts are secularizations of theological ones, particularly the idea of absolute sovereignty, the phrase has acquired a life of its own.³⁸ One common argument is to link medieval nominalism and voluntarism to early modern theories of absolutism, and later to political contract theories (eg. Milbank 9-18), the general claim being that an elevation of divine will over divine reason in creation implies or licenses the similar elevation of human will over other principles (such as virtue or

³⁸ See eg. Shuger, *Political Theologies*; Hammil and Lupton eds.; Kahn, *Future*.

law) in politics. The difference between absolutist and contractual politics becomes a disagreement over which human will is emphasized, but the theological interpretation of this choice varies; if the monarch models God closely, then choice of absolutism or contractualism tracks the tension between predestination and human freedom. Faustus's metaphysical confusions suggest the nominalist-voluntarist dilemma, but his impulses are more or less apolitical. On the other hand I suggest that *Midsummer*, like Hooker, counters an Elizabethan tendency towards absolutist divine right theories linked to theories of predestination with something that looks like a rejection of medieval nominalism-voluntarism.

The broader argument of the dissertation suggests that political theologies are in these plays not metaphoric but metonymic; that is, God's rule is not merely a model for politics but an active agent of it, and the nature of this activity or metonymic structure is determinative for the politics that follows. In *The Duchess* the metonym becomes almost a pure metaphor. While Antonio's opening speech contrasts the French king's praise of his own just rule as *heaven's* or his "master's masterwork" with the Aragonian court's corruptions (1.1.5ff), this dualistic political theology is replaced by Delio's concluding praise of *nature* for sometimes making the great "lords of truth" (5.5.109ff). The opposition of nature and heaven suggests the play's ambivalent Neostoicism, which John Milbank observes is, via the Stoic concept of a self-preserving individual, a point of contact between Machiavellian civic humanism and the "natural rights legacy of liberalism/absolutism" (24). Yet as my chapter argues, *The Duchess* emphasizes not the civic possibilities of Neostoicism but rather its amoral perversions. Moreover Neostoic political thought is complexly related to Machiavellian thought, as Tuck has shown. If Neostoicism can offer a providential mitigation of Machiavelli's *Prince* (Brooke 12-36), the play worries the impenetrability of this providence.

The Tempest provides an even more complex example of the metonymic understanding of political theology, located, as Stuart Clark's *Thinking with Demons* would suggest, in its demonology. As Clark argues, if the sovereign's defeat of witchcraft was a powerful legitimization of his "role as God's lieutenant on earth" (467), the Machiavellian understanding of Roman civil religion as a myth imposed by rulers to produce unity or

virtue (or reinforce their power) could undermine belief in witches as part of the civil mythology (596ff). As my chapter argues, Prospero's conjuring is somewhere between these positions. His theatrical conjuring is meant to produce unity among the Neapolitans, perhaps approximate virtue, and reinforce his power, though its theological claims are quite suspect. For example, Prospero via Ariel makes Antonio think that nature is calling out his sin, a complex use of naturalized spirit magic to create a civil religion appealing to the moral authority of nature. Nevertheless the conjuring and spirits are presented as "real" within the world of the play. The dualistic sense of mystical monarchs defeating witches is however reduced by Prospero's non-confrontation of Sycorax and absorption of Caliban, and his possible implication as a conjuror. A Lutheran demonology minimizing the fear of witchcraft as a spiritual trial may frame Prospero's conjuring, but his spirits are of course not demons in any traditional sense. The language the play uses for Prospero's straddling of mystical monarchy and Machiavellian civil religion is covenantal; this covenantal language partly reinforces Milbank's stress on the common origin of absolutism and contractual politics produced by nominalism-voluntarism, but it also mitigates the freedom of both Prospero and his subjects through what I have called a sense of covenantal accommodation and a particularly Christian pattern of feeling distinguishing legitimate from illegitimate covenants.

What I have described as a shift in emphasis from materialist discernment of spirits to affective and experiential criteria is a nontrivial qualification to another trend in secularization theories, for example the claims of Hans Blumenberg that the legitimate inheritance of modernity is a sense of human "self-assertion" growing out of voluntarism-nominalism and finding expression in the twin Renaissance developments of art and science. We need only to consider *Faustus* to see how Renaissance "self-assertion" can take a less optimistic turn. Charles Taylor offers a slightly different story, qualifying Weber's "disenchantment" by distinguishing between the physical disenchantments of the new science and the philosophical or moral ideas that identify "human flourishing" in the world as the ultimate source of meaning, both of which are necessary for the emergence of his "buffered selves." For Taylor, Neostoicism is a

pivotal movement in the ethical reconfiguration of modernity. But my chapter on *The Duchess* illustrates the complex way physical and moral disenchantment are intertwined, and moreover the way affective forms of spirituality – the very sources of meaning Taylor emphasizes – could be seen to be incompatible with Neostoic theorizing. In other words, the particular expression of the human “self-assertion” Blumenberg stresses matters; Neostoicism looks and feels very different from contract theory. Moreover, Milbank’s discussion of the emergence of political economy describes the role affective sympathy played in its attempt to counter the moral failings of contract theory, and emphasizes that political economy was in its origins linked to a theory of providence that emphasized regularity rather than occasionalist intervention (26-47). As my chapter on *The Tempest* argues, affective sympathy is central to the play’s anthropology from the very beginning, but exceeds the anthropological framing by being embedded in a covenantal theology in which sympathy can operate between beings of a variety of substances, including spirits and perhaps deities.

The Tempest’s covenantalism then sidesteps the problem of human substance in a way that is partly anticipatory of liberalism’s positing of formally equal individuals operating in a discourse of abstract rights and property. But my dissertation shows how gender tends to resist this movement towards abstraction from substance, partly because of its tendency to re-emerge in any social theory as a testing ground for theories based on likeness or difference (like the Renaissance discourse of friendship (e.g. Shannon)), but also for the more contingent ways gender difference historically tends to turn into hierarchies in the domain of marriage and sexuality. If in *Midsummer* gender difference is understood through the sacramental discourses of mystical marriage, the cosmological discourse of fertility, and the Pauline discourse of edification and Christian liberty, *The Duchess* tests new ideals of companionate marriage along with an increased buffering in its understanding of female fertility. But female affective sensibility is still a residual form of gendering in the play. In *The Tempest*, covenantal understandings may move closer to equality, but though mitigated, the play still features tendencies to refer to Miranda as marriage property (eg. Sebek). Though lunar influence has particularly

gendered effects, the dissertation illustrates more generally that secularization stories can't be gender-neutral.

The dissertation also offers material for considerations of secularization as a reconfiguration of attitudes towards time. In *Faustus* the play's linear time is tied to arbitrary cosmological and contractual periods leading up to Faustus's arbitrary predestination. In *Midsummer* a much more complex temporality is tied to the temporal "hiccups" of lunar influence over fertility and the mixed spiritual maturities of its characters; spiritual maturity is linked to but not constrained by class and gender, and the (human) cast themselves are a polychronic blend of timeless aristocrats, mythological Greeks, and English craftsmen. *The Tempest* returns to a linear temporality that is foregrounded as leitmotif, but its countdown is more optimistic than *Faustus*'s. The time of the play is the time available for Prospero's project of alchemy, a spiritual transformation that is both an apocalyptic and creative impulse, and is linked to the marriage project of a single generation propagating and improving itself. In this sense *The Tempest* reconciles Blumenberg's description of Renaissance self-assertion via science and art and, the argument he was combatting, Karl Löwith's positing of an eschatological structure to modern myths of progress.³⁹ For *The Tempest*, the millenium and apocalypse are created within each generation, as a process of artistic (though covenantal) creation; this is the sole progress available within each little life rounded by sleep. Milbank suggests how Hobbes's and Spinoza's developments of a new biblical hermeneutics was related to their understanding of secular time and the space of scientific inquiry (18-22); *The Tempest*'s bounding of creation by covenants accommodated in time to changing scientific understandings has some relation to these ideas, but in its appeal to the "sign of Jonah" seems more tolerant of the Christocentric meaning of spiritual experience than Milbank allows Spinoza or Hobbes to be.

Finally, the case studies of the dissertation offer complicating questions for accounts of the emergence of a secular theatre. While Stephen Greenblatt's influential discussion of

³⁹ See Wallace's introduction to Blumenberg.

the circulation of social energy in *Shakespearean Negotiations* often argues that theatre “evacuates” ritual practice, it also suggests the possibility of a less than evacuated relationship in its typology of “symbolic acquisition” which recognizes alongside “acquisition through simulation” and “metaphorical acquisition” the more complicated “acquisition through synecdoche and metonymy” (10-11). My dissertation is not alone in suggesting that demonological discourse is one major site in which other non-evacuated understandings of theatrical ritual are made possible, and in which relationships of metonymy and synecdoche are more fully explored.⁴⁰ In *Faustus*, for example, the vanishing of the good and bad angels of the morality plays and their replacement by Helen and the Old Man are a metatheatrical recreation of Faustus’s own sense of a universe that provides no signs of invisible grace; the audience’s tested ability to believe the Old Man’s testimony sits uncomfortably next to audience testimony of real devils surprising the players on stage, and a small industry of authors have observed that conjuring’s particular performative character makes its representations on stage difficult to distinguish from its practice in reality.⁴¹

But Calvinist conjuring is an extreme case, and my dissertation shows that plays which offer their own differing accounts of a theological cosmology can imagine theatre’s role within that cosmology in strikingly different ways. Metatheatrical moments within these plays are often testing grounds for claims of theatre’s secularity, but each metatheatrical moment operates on its own terms. In my chapter on *Midsummer*, I adapt Jeffrey Knapp’s arguments for an understanding of a theatre that relies on a Pauline theory of edification, but I view this theatre functioning within the play’s Hookerian cosmology. The mechanicals’ theatre is thereby legible as a form of preaching, but its failure as a doctrinal delivery mechanism is framed by the greater theatrical power of the rest of the play. The play’s more general treatment of ritual suggests that theatre can have a variety of roles including the unpredictable manipulation of grace, the hope of edification, and

⁴⁰ Greenblatt acknowledges magic’s significance to *The Tempest* only in passing (157). His famous chapter on Harsnett and *Lear* is where he most clearly stakes his claim of ritual evacuation, but *Lear*, the most evacuated of Shakespeare’s plays, is a poor paradigm.

⁴¹ eg. Sofer, Guenther ch. 3, Poole *Supernatural Environments* ch. 1.

the strategic fallback of the avoidance of offence; Puck's epilogue metatheatrically frames the functioning of the entire play between the possibility of a gracious (lunar) fertility and an edifying or inoffensive ritual. Similarly, in my chapter on the *Tempest*, I argue that Prospero's epilogue frames the theatre as one of many sites in a political-theological economy which is never autonomous – either as the sovereign's or as the subject's prerogative – but always dependent on the supplement of the fungible medium of the air it presents as a prayer or breath continuous with both the airy spirit Ariel and with the obscure influence of divinity. What Greenblatt's discussion of the play frames as a paradox between autonomy and dependence in art produced by the economic realities of Shakespeare's theatre company (158-60), I see as framed within a broader theological cosmology which subsumes art and economy within it.⁴² Both analyses resist Greenblatt's terms precisely to the extent that they read the plays as presenting coherent arguments of their own for the role of theatre within a larger cosmology.⁴³ A belief in the possibility of coherentist readings of Shakespeare, rather than the more common ironic or deconstructive readings, is one of the methodological gambles of the dissertation.

⁴² Genevieve Guenther's demonological treatment of *The Tempest* conversely moves towards a theory of aesthetic autonomy; see chapter 3.

⁴³ My readings only occasionally argue with Greenblatt, for example his passing treatment of the fairy blessing of the beds (11). The most extended disagreement is with Greenblatt's reading of Prospero's epilogue, which I treat in a footnote at the end of chapter 3.

Chapter 1 - Ritual and Edification in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

1 Introduction: marriage timing and the moon

A Midsummer Night's Dream takes place in a temporal gap. In its opening scene, Theseus and Hippolyta agree to delay their marriage four days until the new moon, but disagree about the delay's meaning. For Theseus the 'happy days' (1.1.2) of delay will pass with emasculating slowness (the old moon as dowager lingers his desires); for Hippolyta, 'four days will quickly steep themselves in night; / Four nights will quickly dream away the time' (1.1.7-8). Theseus's desire and Hippolyta's reluctance explain this difference in perception, but each also represents the delay to their own advantage. Hippolyta compares the new moon to 'a silver bow / new-bent in heaven' (1.1.9-10), the apotheosis of an Amazon symbol of power, which will 'behold the night of our solemnities' (1.1.11). In response, Theseus tells his master of revels to "stir up the Athenian youth to merriments" (1.1.12) to set the mood for the 'pomp' (1.1.15) of their wedding.

Whether 'pomp' or 'solemnity,' the disagreement about the delay is also a disagreement about the meaning of their marriage ritual. Theseus's use of popular festivity or apparent misrule aims to create concord among his subjects and earn their endorsement of the marriage (Wilson, *Kindly Ones* 200). Hippolyta conversely aligns the delay with a natural symbol that allows her to present her suffering as a self-inflicted triumph (the Amazons cut off one breast to improve their archery). In both cases Theseus gets what he wants, but his subjects and his bride may have different ideas about the meaning of these accommodations. Theseus hopes to establish a unitary meaning by changing Hippolyta's pale lunar melancholy to happiness through the agency of his revels and, oddly, by a reminder of his capacity for violence, his confession that he "wooed [her] with [his] sword, / And won [her] love doing [her] injuries" (1.1.16-17). By doing so he treats her as one of his subjects. Hippolyta's reaction, which I will treat at the end of the chapter, shows that his success is questionable.

Yet, whether the moon is dowager crone or Amazonian virgin, Hippolyta and Theseus likely agree that the delay's material purpose has to with the moon's third hypostasis as mother. In his elaborate treatment of the play's astrological symbolism, David Wiles has set the play within an epithalamial convention relying on the popular belief in the synchronicity of menstruation with the lunar cycle, with menstruation ending and peak fertility occurring at the new moon (Wiles 73, *passim*), and Helen Hackett has more explicitly discussed the humoral basis of this belief (347-50). Wiles stresses the parallel need for harmony in marriage symbolized by the conjunction of solar and lunar cycles, and Hackett sees the delay as an unproblematic accommodation of cycles and sovereigns, citing as evidence their son, the "extraordinarily beautiful and gifted Hippolytus" (350).

But fertility, harmony, and the fate of offspring are more complex than either Wiles or Hackett allow is relevant for this marriage. The unreliable synchronization between menstruation and lunation has been acknowledged since at least Aristotle,⁴⁴ as sixteenth-century gynecological manuals also recognized.⁴⁵ The play's strange time-scheme, which collapses three days and nights into the single extended night that spans the second and third acts, seems to suppress the precise synchronization the monarchs hope for. On the early morning of the (presumed) fifth day, following Titania and Oberon's reconciliation, Theseus and Hippolyta emerge from the woods having "performed" an unspecified "observation: (4.1.103). Were they watching ('observing') for the new moon, something that would seem unnecessary given the almanac the mechanicals consult in another scene, or performing some other kind of fertility rite (or 'observation')? Suggesting that the childless Titania suffers from hysteria, Hackett identifies herbal remedies in the names of Titania's fairies Peaseblossom and Mustardseed (344), and observes that the remedy called Diane's bud used on Titania is mugwort, a medicine for menstrual regularity (349). Richard Wilson has similarly observed that love-in-idleness was used as a remedy for related lunar rheumatic disease (*Secret Shakespeare* 144). Whether or not

⁴⁴ Aristotle in *The Generation of Animals* (4.2, 4.10) attributed it to matter's resistance to nature (nature by definition the regular cycles of the sun and moon).

⁴⁵ Though their corrective advice may refer obliquely to abortion (McLaren), the control of menstrual irregularity itself seems to be an aim.

Titania's sexual biology is the same as human women's is doubtful, but in any case these herbs are never, as far as we know, used by Hippolyta.⁴⁶

If the play hints that natural irregularity may require manipulations such as these to guarantee fertility, the cause of harmony in marriage and society and the fate of the offspring are even more vexed. Shortly after his emergence from the woods, Theseus's assumptions about the political efficacy of his rituals in ensuring popular consent are undermined when, coming across the sleeping Athenian lovers, he assumes that "they rose up early to observe / The rite of May, and, hearing our intent, / Came here in grace of our solemnity" (4.1.131-3). The lovers, former Mayers, are now elopers, and their presence is the opposite of ritual submission. More seriously for the play's metaphysics, proper marriage timing would seem to obviate the need for the fairy blessing of the bed with "field-dew consecrate" (5.1.406) that closes the play. Stephen Greenblatt has observed that this evokes "the Catholic practice of anointing the marriage bed with holy water" (11) and has influentially argued that it is a symbolic acquisition of 'social energy' for the theatre that works by distancing stage from ritual, emptying it of significance; but I agree with Richard Wilson that the blessing instead "seems designed to reinvest validity in ritual" (*Secret Shakespeare* 146-7). Yet while Theseus and Hippolyta's son Hippolytus may be spared "the blots of nature's hand" (5.1.400) as Hackett claims, the other clause of the fairy blessing of the beds, that "the issue there create / Ever shall be fortunate"

⁴⁶ Within the epithalamial tradition Wiles cites, Donne's *Epithalamion made at Lincoln's Inn* is a revealing "burlesque" not only for its stress on the "carnality of marriage" (Wiles 70), but because it is full of specific impediments to fertility, female and male. (For example: the 'hunger-starved womb' of the church or 'balm-breathing thigh,' the former suggesting uterine disease or hysteria which could be associated with menstrual irregularity, the latter of which suggests humoral treatments for such diseases involving fumigation; or the sodomitical practices of farmers with their animals; or the hermaphroditism of the university-trained groom experienced in transvestite theatre.) Donne's poem also stresses the institutional co-option of marriage. But even Wiles's paradigm for the tradition, Spenser's *Epithalamion*, which, as Kent Hieatt showed, strives structurally to represent the cycle of the solar year, and partly accommodates the moon (Wiles 69), may fail to take into account the biology of the real woman it is addressed to (Spenser's bride to be). The poem's final stanza is prematurely terminated, and the poet's concluding acknowledgement that his bride "would not stay your dew time" (l. 430) to receive his other gifts, given the poetic association of lunar dew and sexual emissions, may be a more explicit acknowledgement of the double failure of poetry and marriage planning in the face of nature's timing. We have, perhaps, a hint of this irregularity in the irregular stanzas, which pair typically to 30 or 31 long lines representing days, too long for the average lunation of about 29.5 days, and in the unexplained pattern of short lines. Might these patterns represent a menstrual calendar?

(5.4.396-7), cannot possibly apply to Hippolytus, the subject of his own tragedy.⁴⁷ Why does the blessing seem to partly fail if the fairies are, as they seem to be, agents explanatory of natural causation? What does it mean for a fairy to *bless*, rather than to *do* – particularly in response to a human blessing or prayer? Can fairy ritual explain human ritual?

In this chapter I will argue that the untimeliness⁴⁸ of the play, its uncertainty about the precise temporal relation of its parts which is somehow contained by its presentation of ritual, should be read alongside English theological arguments of the mid-1590s about ritual practice.⁴⁹ My argument includes at least three different kinds of temporal mixtures: the interaction between a nature with an uncertain temporal structure (the timing of fertility) and the spiritual order of grace; the coexistence in society of people of different historical temporalities here marked as class differences (for example, the play's mixed cast of mythological Greek monarchs, timeless aristocrats, and English craftsmen); and the coexistence in society of people of differing degrees of *spiritual* maturity. To the extent that spiritual distinctions are discernible through material differences, they pose an ontological problem. For example, the timing of fertility may be a sign or guarantee of grace (as the blessing suggests), but theological reasons limit its predictability. To the extent that people of differing spiritual maturities co-exist in societies marked by other divisions, they form an ethical problem. How are men and women, or Greek aristocrats and English craftsmen, to interact if their relative spiritual maturity bucks social hierarchies? To handle the ontological problem, I will argue that the play understands the “how” of ritual practice in a way similar to the theology of Richard Hooker. To handle the ethical problem, I will argue that the play draws on English reformation readings of St. Paul's epistles. The result is that a given ritual practice can be interpreted differently by different people, and act differently on different

⁴⁷ See Montrose 146-50, 166 n.65 for Hippolytus' story as a darker intertext shadowing the play

⁴⁸ I adopt the term from Jonathan Gil Harris's *Untimely Matter in the Time of Shakespeare*, though Harris is mainly concerned with material culture.

⁴⁹ For broader surveys of ritual's significance in the Renaissance and Reformation, see e.g. Burke, Karant-Nunn, Muir, Hutton.

people;⁵⁰ In some (acceptable) sense a single instance of a ritual can be both a source of grace and the subject of comic derision to different participants. In the last three sections of the chapter I will treat *Midsummer*'s metatheatricity, and the way in which the play presents theatre as a potential form of religious ritual, though as other rituals one subject to the same uncertainty as to its precise spiritual status, whether sacramental, edificatory, or merely tolerable.⁵¹ At the same time I will argue that its metatheatricity allows *Midsummer* to exploit the language of dramatic theory to interpret the untimeliness of ritual as a fungibility between comedy and tragedy realized through transformations of emotional dynamics. For example, just as in the story of *Pyramus and Thisbe* a delay turns love tragic, timing errors in the performance turn the play comic.

Though Theseus grants Hermia the same delay for her decision about marriage that he grants Hippolyta, these temporal alignments mask very different regimes of power subjecting the two women. To begin, therefore, I will consider what late Elizabethan culture might say about the legal domains under which Hermia negotiates her marriage, arguing that the play presents a contrast between a patriarchal political theology imposed by Theseus and a natural law embodied by the fairies which is evocative of the theology of Richard Hooker. This understanding of the fairies opens up the play's representations of ritual to broader theological consideration.⁵²

2 Marriage and Elizabethan political theology

In coming to terms with *Midsummer*'s presentation of Hermia and Lysander's elopement in this section I want to highlight the play's echoes of late Elizabethan debates over marriage. Though marriage was officially no longer a sacrament after the English

⁵⁰ cp. Asad on the transformation of ritual from effective to hermeneutic (ch. 2). I thank Joel Rodgers for the reference.

⁵¹ cp. the more general claims of Jeffrey Knapp's *Shakespeare's Tribe* which presents theatre as a kind of preaching.

⁵² Because my focus is theological and cosmological, I generally ignore the cultural significance of fairies and Amazons as distinctly classed myths countering patriarchy (cp. Lamb, Montrose esp. 124-50). Each domain in the play – the Athenian rulers, Athenian subjects, fairy kingdom, and English mechanicals – has distinct ideologies about nature and gender encoded in their myths. Lander and Buccola offer contrasting understandings of the fairies' relationship to religious faith.

reformation, marriage law remained generally unchanged through Elizabeth's reign (Carlson 78-87). Clandestine marriages were recognized by canon law but without doctrinal grounding in their sacramentality, and were censured through civil law's control of dowerage and inheritance rights (Carlson 25-33, 139). Attempts to reform marriage law, including the 1590's arguments over clandestine marriages, were stymied by the broader failure of systematic canon law reform (Carlson 85-7), whose stress on disciplinary moral supervision, deriving from its European origins in "the classical Reformed tradition of political theology" (Kirby 359), conjured fears of a reorganization of powers of queen, church, and parliament. Ironically, whereas the Catholic church had struggled to sacramentalize marriage in a contest with state and family authorities (Muir 37, 41), in the Elizabethan context the incomplete Reformation of marriage had the effect of simultaneously reducing the institutional powers of church, state, and family because the residual power of clandestine marriage rested in the individual couple. Marriage in *Midsummer* may therefore be read as a site of Elizabethan political theology, the disputed location of sacral sites in politics.⁵³ But, I want to stress, marriage was also an issue whose political status was coupled to the problem of sacramental grace. By the 1590s, earlier debates between presbyterians and conformists over ritual practice and ecclesiology had transformed into debates about predestination, highlighting the specific tension between predestinatory and sacramental grace stressed by what Nicholas Tyacke has called the "anti-Calvinist" movement emerging in that decade (Shuger, *Political Theologies* 120). Marriage's sacramental heritage and the transforming grounds of English ecclesiological controversy, I suggest, meant that marriage was for Shakespeare particularly fertile meeting ground of these institutional and theological tensions.⁵⁴

⁵³ cp. Shuger *Political Theologies*; Hammill and Lupton eds; Kahn *Future*.

⁵⁴ The tension between sacramental and institutional understandings of marriage is already present in Ephesians 5:32's description of the marriage of Christ and the church as a 'mystery' (*sacramentum* in the Vulgate), the scriptural locus for Catholic claims of marriage's sacramentality disputed on linguistic grounds by Protestants (Carlson 37-41). Augustine had read the comparison of Christ's love for the church to medicinal wedding purifications (Eph. 5:25-27) as a metaphor for the broader process of edification, the mutual offices of members of the corporeal church acting in unity and charity (*De Doctrina Christiana* 1.xvi). But the epistle uses the mystical marriage to demand female subservience, and argues from the predestination of the elect (presumably the entire church) to conclude with strict precepts for moral behaviour and quietism, including the subservience of wives to husbands, children to parents, and masters to servants. Ephesians is focused on the political demands of the church, and susceptible to readings

Religious historians have argued that in the 1590s, partly as an effect of consensus on predestination, the “puritan” and “conformist” tendencies within the English church were in some ways converging. Peter Lake has described the twin development in the period of absolutist and quietist tendencies in the conformist church. The former followed Hadrian Saravia’s divine right arguments based on the absolute will of the sovereign modelled on unconditional paternal authority (135-9); the latter followed Richard Bancroft’s rationalist suppression of enthusiasm or emotional participation in religion. Though preserving ecclesiastical structure, these conformist positions found alliance with puritan positions on strict Calvinist predestination and (particularly in Saravian arguments) in the apparent collapse of the invisible and visible church, a distinction which had previously distinguished the conformist position from the puritan. This alignment may have culminated in the response to the anti-Calvinist debates at Cambridge, the predestinarian Lambeth articles approved by Whitgift in 1595 to the Queen’s displeasure (Tyacke 28-58, Spinks 40-41). Lake has influentially argued that Hooker’s *Laws* was written against this double threat of revived Presbyterianism and developing extremism in the conformist position (145-6). So before arguing the case for Hooker’s ideas in the play, I want to suggest that one can find this alignment of Saravian divine right kingship, religious quietism, moral discipline, the collapse of the invisible and visible church, and strict Calvinist predestination in the alliance of Egeus and Theseus in *Midsummer*’s opening scenes.

Theseus and Egeus express a variety of positions resembling those of Elizabeth’s bishops and the puritan or presbyterian remnant.⁵⁵ Theseus fits the profile of the sacral founder-lawgiver-king Debora Shuger has argued links Plato’s *Laws* and Martin Bucer’s *De Regno Christi*, “the earliest and fullest exposition of what would become the Puritan

justifying the collapse of the visible and invisible church, identifying moral discipline with election. Peter Lake (*Anglicans and Puritans*) has distinguished the presbyterian from the conformist position based on the latter’s insistence on the separation of the invisible and visible churches.

⁵⁵ I wish to stress that I am not identifying Theseus or Egeus with positions expressed by the Queen, who often found herself in conflict with both her bishops and the puritans.

social programme” (*Political Theologies* 11) and a major influence on canon law reform proposals put forward by the bishops (Kirby 362). Theseus claims joint temporal and spiritual authority over Hermia’s case, endorsing Egeus’ legal claim to “dispose of” (1.1.42) her in Saravian terms aligning paternity with divinity; her “father should be as a god” (1.1.47). Though the death penalty Egeus invokes for disobedience was never an Elizabethan law, it was proposed by some theologians and political theorists (including William Perkins and Jean Bodin) based on the analogy between the family and the state (Sokol 37). Theseus’ confirmation that one legal penalty is “to die the death” (1.1.65) quotes the Geneva Bible’s translation of Genesis 2:17, the punishment for eating the apple. This phrase in Elizabethan writing is usually a reference to the fall used to justify Christian soteriology;⁵⁶ here it links penal justice with soteriology, one aspect of the puritan identification of visible and invisible church (Shuger, *Political Theologies* 117ff). Egeus’s choice of Demetrius over Lysander, which the play stresses is unjustified by Demetrius’ merit, aligns this election by father-god with strict predestination. Hermia’s complaint that since she has loved Lysander Athens is no longer “a paradise” (1.1.205), wondering “what graces in my love do dwell / That he hath turned a heaven unto a hell?” (1.1.206-7) further suggests the collapse of visible and invisible church, the paradoxical seizure by the church-state of her social-soteriological standing from the invisible powers of grace aligned with her love.

But while Egeus insists that the law execute his daughter “immediately” (1.1.45), like Genesis’s reinterpretation of the meaning of death, Theseus reinterprets the law to provide both a delay and an out for Hermia.⁵⁷ These mitigations seem to combine legal principles of equity and certain gendered concessions. Theseus’ handling of Demetrius’ broken engagement as a “private schooling” (1.1.116, 125) evokes Shuger’s discussion of the handling of similar cases in Chancery courts as a penitential rather than penal attitude to sacral justice (*Political Theologies* 97ff, 102ff). Theseus’ penitential

⁵⁶ An EEBO search confirms this claim.

⁵⁷ Egeus’s apparent ignorance of the law makes it hard to tell whether this is a reinterpretation or a mere clarification. Theseus’s overruling of Egeus’s demand for law in act 4, since Demetrius no longer wishes the engagement, is a clearer act of equity.

mitigation of Egeus' penal position may align them respectively with 'Anglican' and 'Puritan' approaches to justice (117ff). Similarly, his offer to Hermia of the nun-like life of a "barren sister" worshipping the "cold fruitless moon" (1.1.70-74) is an institutionalized religious alternative to death, but one premised on her erotic self-control, the ability to "master so [her] blood" (1.1.74). In typically Protestant fashion, Theseus presents this mastery as unlikely given her fallen nature, subordinating it to the "earthlier happy" married woman fulfilling her vocation by "distilling her rose" by bearing children (1.1.75).⁵⁸ Theseus presents marriage as the easier option, one admitting a more realistic form of spiritual purification than the harsh life of the cloister.⁵⁹ Like his dismissal of Hippolyta's lunar melancholy, Theseus condescends to Hermia's feelings but only by redescribing her options within a paternalistic institutional context making his preferred option seem more attractive.

In response to the strict predestination built into the choice of Demetrius and the institutional discipline of Theseus's mitigations, Lysander and Hermia seem to adopt what Nicholas Tyacke has called the "anti-Calvinist" opposition of sacramental to predestinatory grace and to phrase this opposition in a particularly anti-institutional form. By insisting that her "soul consents not to give sovereignty" to Demetrius' "unwished yoke" Hermia starkly differentiates between spiritual and political power (1.1.82). More strikingly her first exchange with Lysander presents marriage in subtly Christocentric terms. Their conversation (1.1.133-155) presents true love as a Christ-like unity miraculously transcending all practical divisions between people – age, blood, social

⁵⁸ Theseus adopts 1 Cor. 7:36-40's discussion of marriage, which assigns the prerogative to dispose of daughters in marriage to their fathers, and also by context suggests marriage as women's vocation; yet the Geneva note says clearly that children are not to be forced to marry against their will.

⁵⁹ In its granting Hermia an agency through chastity, this is somewhat unlike Theseus earlier dismissal of women's passive role in conception which he earlier used to justify Egeus's godlike power over her as "one that composed your beauties, yeah, and one / To whom you are but as a form in wax / By him imprinted, and within his power / To leave the figure or disfigure it" (48-52). While this stance was supported by the Aristotelian theory of conception in which the form of a fetus was impressed by the male seed onto female matter of menstrual fluid, it was disputed by the Hippocratic-Galenic theory which implied an equal participation of male and female seeds (McLaren 16-17). Theseus's recognition of the agency of female blood or passion is a condescension to Hermia's feelings that may be biologically motivated.

pressure, natural disasters. Three repetitions of the word ‘cross’ frame the exchange, in which love is in Lysander’s words

... momentary as a sound,
 Swift as a shadow, short as any dream;
 Brief as the lightning in the collied night,
 That, in a spleen, unfolds both heaven and earth,
 And ere a man hath power to say 'Behold!'
 The jaws of darkness do devour it up:
 So quick bright things come to confusion. (1.1.143-9)

This lightning strike revealing both heaven and earth, unfolding like an apocalyptic scroll (Is. 34:4, Rev. 6:14), is a spiritual revelation of a transcendental truth that escapes the control of those like Pilate who would say *ecce* (Behold!) in order to subsume it to human institutions. The Christological hints seem to draw on pre-Reformation English popular understandings of the sacraments as tightly linked to the Crucifixion (Peters). Moreover, Hermia’s response demanding patient suffering rebuts the “tacit rejection of the emotive link with the suffering Christ” associated with some strains of Reformed thought, in particular the views expressed by Theseus (Peters 77):

If then true lovers have been ever cross’d,
 It stands as an edict in destiny:
 Then let us teach our trial patience,
 Because it is a customary cross,
 As due to love as thoughts and dreams and sighs,
 Wishes and tears, poor fancy's followers. (1.1.150-5).

Together, Hermia’s concluding stress on the emotional imagination and Lysander’s description of an apocalyptic or Christocentric connection between heaven and earth seem to anticipate Theseus’s famous denigration of the lunatic, lover, and poet who fantasize devils and roll their eyes between earth and heaven (5.1.2ff). Lysander and Hermia thus seem to present a sacramental view of their marriage designed to refute Egeus’s predestinatory choice and Theseus’s institutional rationalities tied up with it.

But Lysander and Hermia’s spiritual aspirations are of course not guaranteed. Demetrius and Helena’s first scene in the woods reveals how the elopement could easily fail. Rather than the word “cross,” the formally parallel first exchange between Helena and

Demetrius (2.1.191-242) is instead spanned by awkward puns on the word “wood.” Matching this contrast between spiritual cross and material wood, the figures Helena uses to describe her love for Demetrius are materialist, pagan, and dehumanizing: Demetrius’s adamant and Helena’s iron (195ff); Helena’s spaniel and Demetrius’s abusive master (203ff); Helena’s reversal of Ovidian myth (231ff); Helena’s dove and hind pursuing Demetrius’s griffin and tiger. They reveal a violent perversity, mixing rape and masochism, which Lysander and Hermia’s stress on the Crucifixion’s spiritual meaning suppresses. Outside the mitigating sphere of Athenian institutions, only Hermia and Lysander’s love, it appears, is sacred. But Hermia and Lysander plan to elope not to the wild and depraved Ovidian woods, but to an alternative social and legal regime, the house of Lysander’s dowager aunt, who will treat him as her son. The aunt replaces biological paternity with a spiritual (adoptive) maternity, representing and guaranteeing the rights of inheritance and dower denied those who would practice clandestine marriage in England. This supportive feminized legal regime contrasts with Theseus’s figuration of the moon as a dowager wasting his revenue, and presents a broader context within which Lysander and Hermia’s sacramental love can thrive.⁶⁰

The patriarchal Theseus-Egeus alignment of predestination, paternal control of marriages, and moral discipline is thus initially countered in several intertwined ways. Like Hippolyta’s reinterpretation of the biology of lunar cycles, Hermia’s elopement can be justified by a mixture of legal and theological arguments which use gender subversively. These arguments reveal uncertainty about the material and spiritual meanings of marriage and its relationship to institutions evocative of Donne’s satirical *Epithalamion Made at Lincoln’s Inn*. In Donne’s poem, the risk of infertility is clearly acknowledged.⁶¹ Moreover, as Hermia and Lysander fear, marriage is subject to the ulterior motives of money or status-seeking, the social envy of friends, or the institutional demands of the church whose “lean and hunger-starved womb” expects to eventually be

⁶⁰ This adoption, escaping lunar and legal rules, suggests Gal. 4’s adoption by the spirit, turning a servant into a son, redeeming him from the law, including calendrical observances (Gal 4:10).

⁶¹ Including male practices of bestiality and hermaphroditism. Wiles cites this poem briefly as a “burlesque” of the epithalamial tradition (70).

“fattened” by the couple’s dead bodies. This image of the church propagating itself through death, an institutional infertility or hysteria, leads through growing eroticism to the culminating image of the bride’s sacrifice on an altar:

Even like a faithful man content,
That this life for a better should be spent,
So she a mother’s rich stile doth prefer,
And at the bridegroom’s wish’d approach doth lie,
Like an appointed lamb, when tenderly
The priest comes on his knees to embowel her. (85-90)⁶²

This presentation of maternity as an erotic sacrifice of the self mimicking the language of eucharist evokes the similar demands Theseus presents to Hermia in the more Protestant language of a vocation, a gradual spiritual distillation of the self. Both play and poem pose similar questions: If marriage is no longer a sacrament, what is its spiritual significance? Can it escape corruption for material benefit by other institutions? Do its spiritual benefits accrue to both partners equally, to the suffering bride alone, or as the blessing of the beds suggests, to the children, whose existence is never assured? Can marriage help build up the spiritual, rather than material, institution of the church?

3 Providence and predestination: fairy nature, fairy grace, fairy ritual

To answer these questions, we should observe that Lysander and Hermia never arrive at his aunt’s house, but get stuck in the woods: not the Ovidian wilderness Helena imagines, but a naturalized fairy polity. This alternative to Athenian politico-theological tendencies, I suggest adopts strategies similar to Richard Hooker’s *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, published contemporaneously with the play. According to Peter Lake, Hooker’s *Laws* was written against this double threat of Presbyterianism and developing extremism in the conformist position (145-6). Against the Calvinist stress on God’s arbitrary will, Hooker argued that God was governed by his “first law eternal,” a reason whose goal was creaturely virtue. Law was not arbitrary, but that which “assigne[s] unto each thing the kinde ... moderate[s] the force and power ... appoint[s] the forme and

⁶² qtd. from Robbins ed.

measure of working” (qtd. in Spinks 111). A “second law eternal” applied to the creatures and included a law of nature, a law of angels, and a law of reason (Spinks 111-2). These were the top two levels of “a hierarchy of laws which supervened upon ... *adiaphora*,” things indifferent to scripture; human law was to be an expedient accommodation of reason and scripture (Lake 146-8), so Hooker could dismiss claims by both conformists and presbyterians to find prescribed political or ecclesiastical structures in scripture (Lake 151-3, 197-8). Though peripheral to his focus on scriptural authority, church polity, and ceremonies, Hooker’s work was attacked as incompatible with Calvinist predestination because of it suggested the efficacy of prayer and repentance (Spinks 115-6, Lake 185-6). For Hooker, sacraments and salvation were “part of the specific ordering of God’s Church, which itself is set within his general ordering of the created universe,” which included natural law (Spinks 110-1); by shifting emphasis to questions of worship and prayer, Hooker attempted to avoid the threat strict predestination posed to the unity of the visible church (Lake 196).

Against Theseus, Hooker offers a richer understandings of institutions and rituals embedded in an account of nature and a nonarbitrary view of law. Similarly, the play’s understanding of marital fertility must be read through its presentation of nature as a fairy polity. We first encounter them through an exchange between Robin Goodfellow and an anonymous Fairy who serves Titania by “dew[ing] her orbs upon the green” (2.1.9), explaining:

The cowslips tall her pensioners be;
In their gold coats spots you see:
Those be rubies, fairy favours;
In those freckles live their savours.
I must go seek some dewdrops here,
And hang a pearl in every cowslip’s ear. (2.1.10-15)

This lush court sustained by the provision of the fairy monarch and her servants is a political metaphor for nature which draws on the biblical image of the lilies of the field, whose clothing by God prompts the Christian’s trust in God’s provision of life’s material necessities (Mt. 6:25-31). Yet this trust is immediately countered by a description of Robin Goodfellow’s interference in human agriculture, the production of butter and beer.

These two fairies provide a perspectival view of nature, whose ordinary functioning can involve splendor and order, but also great unpredictability, and only sometimes obviously serves human interests.

Jesus invokes his lilies to argue the impossibility of serving two masters, God and Mammon. Read simply politically, this conflict reappears in the dispute between Oberon and Titania, which has caused more dramatic forms of natural unpredictability, freak weather and seasonal disturbances. Nature seems to be based on law roughly to the same extent as Athens; points of exception — the Indian boy, the lunar delay — are handled by recourse to other principles, such as the higher powers of Cupid and Diana contained in the fairies' magical flowers. This is a less neat picture than Hooker suggests, but also structured on a hierarchy of orderly domains.

But as providential agents of an irregular nature, their blessing of the beds implies that the fairies can also be agents of grace. Hooker sees these two roles as intimately related. Describing a chaos evocative of Titania's description of natural disorder that would result from general disobedience to the laws of nature (*Laws* 1.3.2),⁶³ Hooker attributes nature's occasional irregularities to the Fall (1.3.3). Nevertheless, Hooker stresses nature's role as an instrument of God's spirit (1.3.4). Natural law sufficed for Adam's salvation, and when supplemented by supernatural means it may still lead fallen humanity to salvation (Lake 150-1, 182-3). In other words, just as "nature hath need of grace," so "grace hath use of nature" (*Laws* 3.8.6, qtd. in Lake 182). Hooker seems slightly more optimistic than *Midsummer* that nature serves humanity's interests, but

⁶³ "Now if nature should intermit her course, and leave altogether though it were but for a while the observation of her own laws; if those principal and mother elements of the world, whereof all things in this lower world are made, should lose the qualities which now they have; if the frame of that heavenly arch erected over our heads should loosen and dissolve itself; if celestial spheres should forget their wonted motions, and by irregular volubility turn themselves any way as it might happen; if the prince of the lights of heaven, which now as a giant doth run his unwearied course, should as it were through a languishing faintness begin to stand and to rest himself; if the moon should wander from her beaten way, the times and seasons of the year blend themselves by disordered and confused mixture, the winds breathe out their last gasp, the clouds yield no rain, the earth be defeated of heavenly influence, the fruits of the earth pine away as children at the withered breasts of their mother no longer able to yield them relief: what would become of man himself, whom these things now do all serve? See we not plainly that obedience of creatures unto the law of nature is the stay of the whole world?"

nature's irregularity means that any supplementary grace must also act irregularly. This dual irregularity explains the ambiguities of the blessing of the beds, and prevents sacraments coupled to a natural order from operating mechanically. A Baconian nature consisting of essential, masterable regularities is antithetical to this view of grace regularly working through nature.

Popular Calvinist understanding also stressed natural irregularities, handled through the distinction between general and special providence (Walsham, *Providence* 12); Calvinist theologians similarly argued against excess faith in secondary causes like astrology and agricultural regularity, but also against belief in witches and fairies (22-28). According to Alexandra Walsham, this was motivated by "an anthropocentric emphasis on the intimate link between the dispensations of providence and the enigma of predestination" which read "every happening, catastrophic or trivial" as a "signpost concerning the Lord's soteriological intensions" (*Providence* 15). But rather than reading particular providences or natural irregularities as signs of God's predestination, Hooker reads the hierarchy of natural laws as effective means of salvation held out for all, firmly setting predestination within a broader providential system (Spinks 128). Viewed through Hooker's anti-Calvinist framework, *Midsommer's* fairy factions and their resistance to anthropocentrism are both equally necessary parts of a common causal framework uniting providence and predestination.

The fairies' unusual discussion of ghosts presents the night as a soteriological theatre in which the fairies can play a part in the drama of salvation.⁶⁴ Robin's second speech on ghosts suggests that this work may involve the imagination, distinguishing between the "heavy ploughman" (5.1.365) sleeping soundly in confidence of his own salvation through the exercise of his vocation (his traditional figural role in medieval literature (Dean)), and the "wretch that lies in woe / In remembrance of a shroud" (5.1.369-70), fearful of his own mortality. Given the importance of faith, fairy dreams may reveal or

⁶⁴ The ghosts are extremely anti-Calvinist both in their mere existence and in the distinction Robin makes based on their burial place, between the purgatorial ghosts buried in churchyards and the "damned spirits" buried without rites in "crossways and floods" (3.2.382-3).

effect salvation.⁶⁵ But the play ends on the optimistic blessing of the beds, following the ploughman in focusing on the present world rather than the next. Soteriological issues are displaced into Oberon's apotropaic warding off of prodigies, bad luck, and marital disputes (5.1.394-411). To the extent that prodigies in childbirth could indicate parental immorality (Walsham, *Providence* 198-201), and marital love could be evidence of the marriage's sacramentality, the blessing taps an emotional need for evidence of election more tangible than dreams or signs, and by hinting at the propagation of grace to children reduces the arbitrariness of election in ways evocative of covenant theology's use to defend infant baptism (Coolidge 77-98).

Yet, given what we know of Hippolytus's fate, the blessing's efficacy is questionable, and this is true of all fairy rituals in the play. Oberon simply ignores Titania's fairies' apotropaic blessing when he drops the potion in her eyes (2.2.20-30). Still, Titania's long speech accusing Oberon indicates how central ritual is to fairy enactment of providential nature. Since she has refused him the Indian boy, every time her fairies have met "to dance [their] ringlets to the whistling wind," Oberon has disturbed their "sport" (2.1.86-7). This ritual disturbance reverberates through the natural and human worlds, but the combination of "therefore's," parataxis, and personification in Titania's speech suppresses precise chains of causality. "As in revenge" (note the simile) the winds have caused excess rain and floods; the ox and ploughman have worked futilely; human rituals of morris dance and mazes are impracticable; (either because they cannot dance or cannot eat) humans are unhappy and (as cause or effect) do not hymn or carol; and perhaps in response to lack of human worship, but perhaps for other reasons, the moon "governess of floods," though not the initial cause of flooding, angrily "washes all the air / That rheumatic disease do abound" (2.1.82-105). Cause and effect, nature and agent are horribly opaque in this description. The seasonal disruption of nature is a crisis in ritual revealing its causal faultlines; against Matthew 6's distinction of God and Mammon, or spiritual and material needs, the two masters – here viewed as orders of meaning rather

⁶⁵ As creatures of the imagination, "that do run / By the triple Hecate's team ... following darkness like a dream" (5.1.374-7) the fairies' nighttime activities are unpredictably regulated by the moon, here in her guise as triple goddess.

than merely alternate polities – are troublingly confounded. The ploughman only sleeps well when he can trust in his work.

This mise-en-abyme approach to ritual placing it at the heart of both human and fairy worlds means that neither has an ultimate explanatory role. Ritual in *Midsummer* is always a locus of unexplained and partial efficacy, a time and place for a Hookerian hierarchy of laws or agents to supervene. While the fairy world may provide some insight into spiritual matters, it does not pretend to comprehend God's secrets. In Bottom's words, the dream "hath no bottom" (4.1.212).

4 Gendering ritual from sacraments to edification

I now wish to consider the play's specific presentations of ritual more closely within the context of the religious controversies of the 1590s. In their terms, rituals are either scripturally-mandated sacraments, religious *adiaphora* (things indifferent to scripture), or secular customs. But like the confusion of fairy grace and human ritual in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, theological disagreements make this a continuum rather than a categorization.

All restricted the sacraments to two, baptism and communion, understood in the conventional formulation as visible signs of invisible grace. But the details varied widely.⁶⁶ For William Perkins, sacraments were merely visual versions of God's word, understood rationally like a syllogism (Spinks 66, 70-71); since he stressed God's will (not love) in election, sacraments simply had no effect on the unelect (Spinks 58-9, 67). Yet Perkins compared the changes effected by the Spirit on the souls of the elect during the ceremony with its visible stages, suggesting a correlation between the two. Hooker instead viewed the sacraments as part of the providential structure of the universe grounded in God's rational and loving offer of salvation to all. Though of obscure efficacy, they were both a sign of imparted grace and means to grace for the elect, not

⁶⁶ Reformed positions on the sacraments have been heuristically classified by Brian Gerrish as "symbolic memorialism" (they are mere signs of God's goodwill), "symbolic instrumentalism" (they cause what they signify by the action of the Spirit), and "symbolic parallelism" (they indicate inward transformation without causing it) (Spinks 10).

just rationally interpreted by the mind but acting powerfully on the soul (Spinks 139-40). Moreover, sacraments were embedded in a system of worship preparing the mind and affections for saving knowledge, particularly through vision's efficaciousness on the memory and imagination. Hooker thus defended ceremonies as part of the means of salvation (Lake 164-9).

Accordingly, the Athenians debate the rationality and viscosity of their potentially sacramental love. While Hermia wishes her father could see with her eyes, tying love to vision (à la Hooker) (1.1.56), Theseus wishes her sight was regulated by her father's judgement (1.1.57) (à la Perkins). Though Lysander is accused of bewitching Hermia with songs and tokens, having "stol'n the impression of her fantasy" (1.1.32) he counter-accuses Demetrius of betraying Helena's doting idolatry; like Hermia, Lysander suggest that while vision can be abused it can also be a useful preparative to love (à la Hooker). But Helena's conclusion to the first scene goes further than this, reminding us that love can also shape perception. Though aware that Demetrius's "qualities" (1.1.229) don't deserve her admiration, Helena explains:

Things base and vile, holding no quantity,
Love can transpose to form and dignity.
Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind,
And therefore is winged Cupid painted blind.
Nor hath love's mind of any judgement taste;
Wings and no eyes figure unheedy haste. (1.1.230-237)

Helena corrects the others' excessive emphases on vision or reason, but in rejecting both completely through a self-enclosed hermeneutics based on Cupid's iconography, she moves in a direction polemically occupied by Catholicism.⁶⁷ More than doting idolatry, her transposition of material qualities, quantities, and forms presents a paradox akin to transubstantiation, which as Calvin and many English reformers stressed, ignored the common sense understanding of the sacraments' action on the senses and body making them "natural and lively" images ordained by God (Waldron, *Reformations of the*

⁶⁷ Her appeal to Cupid is also subtly reflexive since it is potentially a "base and vile" myth.

Body).⁶⁸ Indeed the Cupidean myth, in Helena's framing, links material fluidity to a crisis of faith:

As waggish boys in game themselves forswear,
 So the boy Love is perjured every where:
 For ere Demetrius look'd on Hermia's eyne,
 He hail'd down oaths that he was only mine;
 And when this hail some heat from Hermia felt,
 So he dissolved, and showers of oaths did melt. (1.1.240-45)

Helena's erotic double-entendre describing Demetrius's melting oaths adumbrates their Ovidian aggressions in the woods, but her suggests that a too-fluid fungibility between transcendent truths and their material expressions (as in transubstantiation) is itself the source of this erotic or spiritual instability. Yet as love corresponds to the mysterious action of sacramental grace, it can be the pure product neither of reasoning, the visual efficacy of the ceremony, nor the material qualities of the visible sign.

The fairy eyedrops translate these paradoxes into a comic exploration of assurance, a central issue in the 1590's predestination controversies (Cummings, *Grammar and Grace* 287-97). The question of assurance is whether those who are in a state of grace can ever fall out of it permanently, or whether apparent lapses are merely temporary and superficial; if the sacraments effected some sort of grace, how durable were these effects? Paradoxically, Lysander and Demetrius experience the fairy eyedrops' effects as spiritual maturations of very different sorts. "Repenting" his time spent with Hermia, Lysander syllogizes too much, praising his newly mature reason, now "marshal to [his] will," which reads in Helena's eyes "love's stories written in love's richest book" (2.2.119-128). Yet this rational textualism sits uneasily with his sensory appetites, praising Helena's beauty and deploring his prior love for Hermia as "surfeit and ... heresy" (2.2.147), a sweet taste rejected after overindulgence. Demetrius conversely claims maturation not into rationality, but into dematerialized mystery or allegory evocative of Paul's putting away childish things and seeing face to face (1 Cor. 13). His

⁶⁸ In these terms also, Helena's perverse materiality in the woods similarly makes her body a dead, unnatural Ovidian image rather than a lively image of God.

love for Hermia “melted as the snow, seems to me now / As the remembrance of an idle gaud / Which in my childhood I did dote upon”; now “the object and pleasure of mine eye / Is only Helena” (4.1.165-170). But like Lysander he appends a gustatory figure: Helena was a taste rejected in sickness, now healthily craved (4.1.170-175). Post-Reformation England’s intensely embodied attitude to the sacraments, which stressed the nutritive function of the elements along with their spiritual effects (Waldron, *Reformations*), helps explain these gustatory figures.⁶⁹ They meet in Paul’s discussion of the Israelites’ baptism in cloud and sea and eucharistic consumption of manna (1 Cor. 10:1-5).⁷⁰ Though all ate “the same spiritual meat,” some were “overthrown in the wilderness.” The love-in-idleness’s effects mimic this transience of sacramental grace; while both men claim spiritual maturation, dramatic irony undermines their sense of assurance and its sensory or rational explanations.

Yet the eyedrops are not ingested, but rather externally applied while sleeping. This suggests they be understood under a broader ritual category than sacramentality.⁷¹ The prayers and hermeneutical disagreements surrounding their application suggest also the issue of scriptural regulation of religious ritual, which also prompted disagreements about visibility and rationality. Since the 1560s, English reformers attempting to ground worship in scripture tended to transpose St. Paul’s method of coping with Jewish ritual practice onto current attempts to deal with the Catholic ritual past, centring on the concept of Christian liberty. Following Whitgift and Cartwright’s debate in the 1570s, Puritans and conformists disagreed on the relative importance of criteria adopted from Paul, that *adiaphora* be orderly, edifying, and avoid offence (Coolidge 5). Conformists stressed the monarch’s freedom to establish orderly observances given accurate, rational doctrinal teaching, which, equated with edification, would prevent idolatrous interpretation of rituals or offence. Puritans conversely worried that rituals would give

⁶⁹ cp. Leontes in *The Winter’s Tale* hoping that Paulina’s magic is “lawful as eating” (Waldron *Reformations* ch. 2).

⁷⁰ This was a common scriptural locus used to support limiting the sacraments to two.

⁷¹ If the name “love-in-idleness” evokes the anti-Catholic codeword “idleness” for idolatry (Wilson, *Secret Shakespeare* 144ff), the hyphenated terms of idolatry and grace may be intentionally indistinguishable.

offence or occasion to sin for those weaker in doctrine and susceptible to idolatry, and understood edification through Paul's model of the church as a body built out of living stones reciprocally sharing their spiritual gifts. In Lake's characterization, this understanding of edification explained Presbyterian and disciplinary tendencies, whereas the conformist position was more tolerant of mixed morals or degrees of spiritual maturity in the visible church since there was no attempt to identify it with the invisible church. Instead of pursuing edification through the resulting Puritan disciplinary tendencies, or relegating edification to doctrinal teaching, Hooker linked edification to ceremony. In Peter Lake's words, "this was ... the reclamation of ... ritual practice from the status of popish superstition to that of a necessary ... means of communication and edification ... more effective than the unvarnished word" (165).⁷²

Accordingly, even though it's initially presented as sacramental, Lysander and Hermia's elopement requires guarantees shading into edifying *adiaphora*. Hermia's vow to meet Lysander in the woods rests on a paradoxical mixture of metaphysical truth and overwhelming experience of male falsity, on Cupid's arrows but also the fire that burned Dido after Aeneas's betrayal (1.1.169-175). Like faith requiring constant performative reassurance, this paradox is resolved through ritual reassertion, as in their negotiation when bedding down in the woods. Hermia resists Lysander's hasty figure of corporeal unity, "one heart, one bed, two bosoms and one troth" (2.2.48); despite his clarification that he meant only an edifying spiritual chaining of hearts with an oath, Hermia insists on a physical distance guaranteed by "manners" and "modesty" until the marriage is solemnized, concluding with a "prayer" for lifelong fidelity (60-70). These rituals delaying and taming their sexual union appear precisely between the love-potion's uses on Titania and Lysander; while violable by rampaging masculinity or love-in-idleness, rituals still crucially shape participants' perceptions of the union that eventually results.

Yet there is a strikingly gendered pattern in these treatments of ritual. Like the rampaging masculinity of the interfering Oberon and Robin Goodfellow, Hermia's

⁷² Lake describes other conformists with less transformational understandings of edification still richer than mere doctrinal instruction (119-122).

coupling of her vow on Cupid to “all the vows that ever men have broke – / In number more than ever women spoke” (1.1.175-6) presents masculinity as inherently unreliable. Similarly, Helena’s stress on Cupid’s boyhood – marking his erotic fluidity and facile movement between material and spiritual as both masculine and immature – seems to undermine Lysander and Demetrius’s claims to maturation in strongly gendered terms. In the rest of this section I want to discuss the theological significance of this gendering of ritual. While marriage’s pre-Reformation history and the problem of fertility freight heterosexual love with the possibility of sacramentality, the play’s relationships between women are more easily read as forms of edification. These homosocial relationships exploit Paul’s organic metaphor of the church’s body while their nonbiological productivity reveals the metaphor’s superiority to marriage for conceiving social unity (identified with the unity of the church). All are forms of female solidarity defined against male outsiders, but while they are legible as critiques of patriarchy itself (Montrose), I want to stress their functioning against and within a patriarchal political theology, adopting at times Paul’s strategies of quietism (e.g. Ephesians 5), but also a counter-discourse, deriving from Paul’s understanding of ritual. The women in the play defy what Lisa Lampert has described as the “exegetical tradition that links the spiritual, masculine, and Christian, and defines them in opposition to the carnal, feminine and Jewish,” the latter treated as outmoded points of origin (2). By portraying women’s approaches to ritual as potentially “strong” or spiritually advanced, as opposed to the idolatrous understandings of the “weak” in spirit, the play refuses to define spiritual maturity through a misogynist supersessionist logic. As the women in the following examples age and their productivity becomes more metaphorical or spiritual, their interpretive strategies (and hence their spiritual status) grow stronger; they are less emotionally affected by male hostility and sexual interference because their bonds with each other are more stable and their rituals can be taken less literally.⁷³

⁷³ Here the lunar hypostases of maiden, mother, and crone signify different degrees of spirituality in the interpretation of ritual.

As the most emotionally intense example, Hermia and Helena's adolescent friendship oscillates between Helena's desire to be "translated" (1.1.191) into Hermia and their mutual hatred in the woods. Against extremes of identity or schism, Helena's complaint idealizes their past in a figure of organic unity, "two lovely berries moulded on one stem," that is symbolically both productive (of song and a needlework flower) and marital (as two houses united in a crest) (3.2.203-14). This "union in partition" (211), like the Pauline corporate church, recognizes individual identities while permitting spiritual production through mutually edifying activities like needlework and song. The friendship's spiritual nature means that while marriage may displace its ritual manifestations, the friendship needn't end. Helena complains that Hermia joins men to mock her, a spiritual betrayal of her sex rather than an erotic betrayal of her self (3.2.215-19). The result is the women's mutual insult as "counterfeit," "puppet," (288) and "painted maypole" (296); their language of idols uses trivial physical differences of height to deny each others' humanity, turning each other from living stones (or berries) united by affection into hated emblems of bad faith.

Titania's friendship with her Indian votaress involves a real pregnancy and child, yet though it eventuates in a kind of co-parenting, the adoption of the Indian boy, this is the product, not the cause, of their friendship. Rather the friendship is a bond between mature women that coexists with their marriages; moreover it is a relationship on surprisingly equal terms ("full often hath she gossiped by my side" (2.1.125)) transcending both the logics of material exchange and of servitude one might expect to characterize the relationship between a goddess and her votaress. The women are drawn together in their mockery of male commerce, the votaress's pregnant belly and trifles given in service to Titania imitating ships' inflated sails and their cargo (2.1.125-134). Though potentially subjects of male exchange (in marriage) themselves, these women doubly deride commercial attitudes to pregnancy and to worship. Against Theseus's suspect characterization of pregnancy as vocation, these women argue that children are not trifles to be given in service or means to an end; Titania insists to Oberon that "the fairyland buys not the child of me" (2.1.122), withdrawing him from the sphere of material exchange. To the pneumatic spirit that vivifies the church and fills the votaress's

womb, the traders have only the wind in their sails; if the women don't explicitly here claim to serve God, they definitely claim not to serve Mammon.

Oberon is threatened by this friendship only when he makes the boy into a token of exchange. His claim to "but beg a little changeling boy" (2.1.120) reveals paradoxically that he views him as a trifle he is willing to make a large fuss about. As a changeling, the boy moves between fairy and human worlds, between spiritual and material significance. The incommensurability of Oberon and Titania's claims on the boy are reminiscent of disagreements between Puritans and conformists; the latter insisted that rituals were spiritually insignificant yet demanded conformity. Oberon's claim on the boy therefore cannot simply be read as an idolatrous overvaluation of trivial signs. I would argue that Oberon gets Titania to relinquish the boy by convincing her, through her absurd love for Bottom, the play's other changeling, that she has also overvalued the boy. Not only does he call her love "dotage" (4.1.46), but he links it to an inappropriate reversal of natural order, describing the dew, usually their pearls, as tears of the disgraced flowers in the wreath Titania bestows on Bottom (4.1.50-55). By evoking the anonymous fairy's providential dressing of the cowslips, Oberon makes an argument like Paul's in Ephesians 5 and 6 for wifely submission as part of the orderly decorum of providence, not as the mere service of Mammon. In other words, though it feels to us like a gaslighting, Oberon gets his way not through force or reason but by making Titania see her attachment to the boy as a fetish.

Finally, the story-telling rituals of older women are interrupted by Robin Goodfellow as a "three-foot stool" slipping from one woman's "bum" prompting her to cry "tailor." The tailor is a stock character of unmanliness (given his small needles) who suggests unwelcome sexual pricking.⁷⁴ The symbol of the needlework that Hermia and Helena valued as form of symbolic productivity is here reappropriated in a form of defensive

⁷⁴ This is a common Shakespearean usage. Stephano's song in *The Tempest* about Kate's tailor "who might scratch her where'er she did itch" (2.2.52) is particularly suggestive given his claim to have been "the man i' th' moon when time was" (132-3), as my next paragraph implies. Similar references to tailors occur in *Henry IV* (Hotspur to Kate about singing (3.1.254), or Falstaff's calling Hal a tailor's yard (2.4.239)) and *Henry IV* 3.2.140 (Falstaff's interrogation of Francis Feeble the woman's tailor).

humor against men. Though Robin impedes young women's farm work, this interference with older women, though a notional sexual assault, has the opposite effect. Their ability to read the pratfall with humor makes the "saddest tale" being told into a symbolic form of productivity; though past their reproductive years, the women "waste" time "waxen in their mirth," pregnant with a happy gender solidarity (2.1.51-57).

And yet, an austere interpretation of Paul's forbidding "filthiness, foolish talking, and jesting" (Eph. 5:4) would forbid these pranks. The play's other Robin and actual tailor, Robin Starveling, suggests such a stance in his casting as the man in the moon. Wiles cites a "stock joke about the Man in the Moon being sexually 'in' the moon" (59) and observes the aristocratic audience of *Pyramus and Thisbe* heckling Starveling for his thinness, weakness, lack of masculinity and being "in the wane." The audience seems prepared to typecast Starveling as a puritanical but hypocritical counterpart to the boisterous "Goodfellow" who encourages charity; the two tailors represent polar forms of masculinity treated by religious controversy that in turn refract different female perceptions of uninvited male sexual attention. I will return to these two types of masculinity soon in my discussion of the mechanicals' play.⁷⁵

In summary, these examples of female solidarity complicate patriarchal characterizations of women as spiritually inferior or immature, by showing their use of ritualized substitutes for biological reproduction to construct subtle reinterpretations of their troubled relationships with men and enrich their relationships with each other. Yet at the same time secondary male reinterpretations re-emerge, like Oberon's or Starvelings, threatening to destabilize female compensations. A more blatant complication is the encounter between Bottom and Titania.

5 Bottom's binge, Titania's purge

Bottom's encounter with Titania breaks this pattern of male harassment of women, almost reversing it. Bottom is more interested in fairy food than sex; Titania, though

⁷⁵ See Knapp for the cultural relevance of this polarity in religious controversy and defences of drama.

doting, commands, binding and feeding him to effect an erotically motivated transformation she describes as spiritual. Their mismatched perceptions confound hierarchies of power and spirituality. Bottom sees the encounter as an ordinary one between equals; Titania sees it as something greater, potentially erotic and sacramental. Bottom's attitude changes only later.

Responding to Titania's instant declaration of love, Bottom stands between the Robins, rejecting puritanical and boisterous tones in favour of a charitable one:

Methinks, mistress, you should have little reason for that. And yet, to say the truth, reason and love keep little company together nowadays – the more the pity that some honest neighbours will not make them friends. Nay, I can gleek upon occasion.
(3.1.135-139)

Like the old women's joking, humor is for Bottom a way to reconcile the "weak" and "strong" poles of the edification debate. Since a harmless 'gleek' or joke can produce neighbourly love, Bottom seems to adopt Paul's caution that "knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth" (1 Cor. 8:1), minimizing the reason sophisticates use to belittle their neighbours' superstitions (such as belief in fairies). Despite her praise of his wisdom, Bottom asks only "wit enough to get out of this wood" (3.1.142). If the wood is the state of nature that may somehow lead to grace, Bottom just wants enough wisdom to get there.

I will argue in this and subsequent sections that there is an inner life to the play centred on Bottom and the mechanicals which tries to resolve questions of ritual practice and church unity in terms of 1 Corinthians' treatment of edification. The most famous biblical allusion in the play is Bottom's misquoting of 1 Corinthians 2:9 when he returns to his senses, and Annabel Patterson has influentially drawn attention to the epistle's broader discussion of church unity (52-70). But while Patterson mentions Paul's figures of edification, she reads them purely as figures for reciprocal material relations, using the context of the peasants' rebellions in the 1590s to argue that the play demands the recognition of the bottom sector of society. Instead I want to stress the religious content of the epistle.

The epistle confronts certain Corinthian Christian's claims to spiritual perfection, ensuing antinomianism, and potential schism. Paul responds with guidance on discipline and worship embodying his ideal of an organic church undergoing constant mutual edification. He subordinates knowledge to charity (1 Cor. 8:1) to explain Christian liberty; his discussion, though shaping all English controversy over ritual, concerns the Jewish prohibition on eating idolothytes, food sacrificed to idols (Coolidge 40ff). Though the wise know that all foods are clean for Christians, eating idolothytes may offend the doctrinally weak or predispose them to carnally understand their liberty (1 Cor. 8:9-13). Paul develops an inclusive understanding of commensal community formation, contrasting the fellowship of communion to that of gentile idolothyte-eaters (1 Cor. 10:14-22). Paul stresses the complex nature of eating with his discussion of the Israelite consumption of spiritual meat and drink (1 Cor. 10:1-14), a passage I mentioned in relation to assurance. He concludes by advising accommodating neighbours' dietary preferences when offence can be avoided (1 Cor. 10:23-33).

I want to observe that the common superstition that eating fairy food trapped one forever in fairy-land (Buccola 53-55), a superstition unavoidably suggested by Bottom's gourmandizing, is exactly the kind of idolatrous understanding of an exclusivist commensal community Paul disputes when discussing idolothytes. Bottom is neither trapped nor worried; his humility shows him less motivated by Corinthian antinomianism or spiritual pride than an enthusiastic sociability realized through food, as his salutations of Titania's fairies confirm. Paul's defence of his own accommodations, becoming "all things to all men that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor. 9:22), evokes Bottom's similar desire to play all parts in the mechanicals' play.⁷⁶ But if Bottom's initial motives were pride or theatrical enthusiasm, in the woods they seem more neighbourly than salvific. His spiritual enthusiasm comes later.

⁷⁶ See Knapp for the general relevance of this Pauline trope in defenses of theatre in the period; cp. Kneidel for poetry.

Titania however has stronger views about food. Pampering him in his sleep (3.1.150, 165) and taking him as her “love” to bed (3.1.165), her commands to her fairies suggest erotic domination:

Come, wait upon him, lead him to my bower.
The moon, methinks, looks with a wat’ry eye,
And when she weeps, weeps every little flower,
Lamenting some enforced chastity.
Tie up my love’s tongue; bring him silently. (3.1.188-191)

This return to the anonymous fairy’s image of the dew-streaked flowers, this time in sympathy with the moon, is very different from Oberon’s later use of the image to shame Titania. The ambivalence of the phrasing “enforced chastity,” implying either unwelcome chastity or chastity’s violation, links the ambivalent lunar causation in Titania’s natural disorder speech (2.1.81-117), to an ambivalent erotic agency. Rape and silencing are framed as a behavioural coercion converting Bottom into a “gentleman” (155) suiting Titania’s status, and augmented with a medical transformation: “I will purge thy mortal grossness so / That thou shalt like an airy spirit go” (3.1.151-2), Titania says, feeding him laxative apricots and figs. Given humoral theory’s continuum between physiology and psychology, this therapy may change his temperament, but also infantilizes Bottom drawing on the infantile roots of adult sexuality in maternal laxation therapy (Paster, *Embarassed* 125-143). Therefore, though comparable to Theseus’s attempt to spiritualize Hermia by making her consent to a maternal vocation, the passive and silenced Bottom’s inability to consent to Titania’s spiritual impositions is more like a baptised infant’s. Spiritual coercion, possibly sexually embodied, can involve nature or maternal authority as much as patriarchal law and politics.⁷⁷ But Bottom, experiencing a wish-fulfillment fantasy, doesn’t resist.

⁷⁷ Paster cites a Cambridge undergraduate play, *Gammar Gurton’s Needle*, featuring an older woman’s sewing needle lodged in a young man’s backside (*Embarassed* 113-125), further framing Titania’s purge as a gender-reversal of *Midsummer*’s two tailors. Laxation therapy may be a gender inversion of the wedding purifications in Ephesians 5’s mystical marriage. Theological readings are complicated by controversies over emergency baptisms administered by women.

Given fairy magic's effects elsewhere, Titania isn't entirely misguided, though her sense of spiritual control is excessive. Bottom's garbled quotation of 1 Cor. 9:10 when the spell is lifted reveals his feeling of epiphany, though an incomplete one that "hath no bottom" (4.1.213) and so does not reach "the deep things of God" (1 Cor. 2:10). Jennifer Waldron's recent arguments that the human body was a divinely-ordained means of grace in post-Reformation England (*Reformations*), and that Bottom's synesthesia models the epistle's stress on foolishness countering wisdom ("The eye of man"), can be augmented here with the observation that Bottom mixes up body parts, sense organs, orifices, and internal seats of spiritual knowledge, confusing the distinction between humoral, sensory, and spiritual forms of knowledge or edification: "The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report what my dream was" (4.1.207-210). That is, Bottom's speech represents a fundamental uncertainty regarding Titania's purge's efficacy. Moreover, by scrambling body parts and their abilities, Bottom also confounds any hierarchy implicit in Paul's mutually edifying body of the church, each part sharing its spiritual gifts with the whole (1 Cor. 12:14-15).⁷⁸

Indeed, the mechanicals imply that Bottom already possessed the gifts of the spirit. Before he returns, Quince and Flute praise Bottom provocatively:

Quince: ... You have not a man in all Athens able to discharge Pyramus but he.
 Flute: No, he hath simply the best wit of any handicraftman in Athens.
 Quince: Yea, and the best person, too; and he is a very paramour for a sweet voice.
 Flute: You must say 'paragon'. A paramour is, God bless us, a thing of naught.

(4.2.6-14)

Given the mechanicals' ubiquitous verbal infelicities, their confusion of paramours and paragons suggests another "thing of *nought*," the Paraclete or Holy Spirit as consoler in Jesus's (Bottom's) absence (John 14:16), and granter of linguistic gifts. There is irony in this linguistic scrambling, but also a kind of serious imitation of speaking in tongues. The

⁷⁸ Waldron similarly finds in the speech intimations of a theatrical phenomenology distributed amongst participants ("The eye of man").

confusion's macaronic contrasts of *amour* and *agon* evokes the two roles Bottom considers before Pyramus (Paramus), lover and tyrant (1.2.19), linking Bottom's Pauline desire to play all parts to these spiritual gifts. While the mechanicals love Bottom for the performances these gifts enable, Titania's error is to love his person, wit, and voice for their own sake.

Flute's concern thus fluctuates interpretively between naughtily suggesting excessive eros and excessive spirituality. In their reluctance to use the wrong word, the mechanicals again evoke the problems of edification and offence.⁷⁹ Rather than excessive spiritual claims, they worry about any hints of suggestive naughtiness. Yet Bottom's plan to have his spiritual experience – an adult baptism evocative of anabaptist bogeymen – translated into a ballad performed at court reiterates the spiritual threat, hinting at the false prophets inundating Elizabeth's court, who – suggestively, given Bottom's experience – were often presented as changelings or holy anorexics (Walsham, *Providence* 203-14).⁸⁰ By suppressing his ballad – a potentially more subversive since uncontrollable medium – and channelling his enthusiasm into the theatre, the theatre is transformed into an activity with legitimately edifying aims; in the process Bottom has been translated from enthusiastic actor, to neighbourly agent of charity, to enthusiastic but conformable preacher.

Yet edifying aims do not guarantee success, and in the remainder of the chapter I will analyze *Pyramus and Thisbe*'s failure. First, I will use Jeffrey Knapp's argument that the theatre was seen by many of its participants as a form of edification comparable to ministry to explore the mechanicals' paranoia about theatrical representation; this argument is supported by work of Patricia Parker and Peter Happé that find in the mechanicals' performance of *Pyramus and Thisbe* traces of the myth's interpretation in

⁷⁹ This worry seems inconsistent with the sexual double-entendres in the performance of *Pyramus and Thisbe*, which I read as intentional later in the chapter.

⁸⁰ The "messiah" William Hacket's 1591 attempted coup was often cited by conformists in polemical conflations of puritans and anabaptists attempting to suppress lay spiritual enthusiasm (Lake 111-113, 127-8). Patterson, following Theodore Leinwand, instead links the mechanicals to the Oxfordshire anti-enclosure rising of 1596, and extends his suggestion to other violent disturbances around London in 1595 (55-6, 69). Of course these two kinds of threats may be related.

the *Ovid Moralisé* tradition as presenting the core of Christian doctrine. Second, I will consider the failure of both audience and players to carry out their roles with charity and condescension appropriate to the mixed spirituality of all participants, again drawing on Pauline understandings of ritual. Finally, by considering the thematic and structural relationships between the mechanicals' performance and the broader play, I will argue that Shakespeare hints at an affective theory of theatrical edification subtler than Titania's humoral purge or the magic love-in-idleness, and analyzable as a comic fusion of dramatic catharsis and eucharistic theology.⁸¹

6 Build it up, tear it down: theatre and edification

The mechanicals' collective profession as craftsmen emphasizes the difference between Paul's organicist ideal of edification (literally, the construction of a building) and their comparatively clumsy building and acting. Quince's prologue, usually taken to be mispunctuated, can be read as a key to their complicated intentions.⁸² A "correct" repunctuation might read as follows:⁸³

If we offend, it is with our good will that you should think we come, not to offend, but with good will to show our simple skill: That is the true beginning of our end. Consider then, we come – but in despite we do not come – as minding to content you; our true intent is all for your delight: We are not here that you should here repent you. The actors are at hand, and by their show, you shall know all that you are like to know.

This version circumscribes the potential for artistic failure by insisting on the actors' simple and humble desire to please. As printed in Quartos and first Folio, and as usually presented, however, the speech is offensive if somewhat garbled:

⁸¹ In this view, Shakespeare sets out the criteria for an effective theatrical communion and its dependence on audience response, by contrasting his dramatic successes with the mechanicals' failure. Jeffrey Knapp makes a similar argument with respect to *Henry V* (115-140).

⁸² cp. Patricia Parker on the mechanicals' repeated linguistic and professional use and misuse of techniques of "joining," including the prologue, though she only occasionally treats the religious implications (*Shakespeare From the Margins* 83-115).

⁸³ As far as I know, this repunctuation was first proposed by Harold F. Brooks' Arden edition.

If we offend, it is with our good will.
 That you should think, we come not to offend,
 But with good will. To show our simple skill,
 That is the true beginning of our end.
 Consider then we come but in despite.
 We do not come as minding to content you,
 Our true intent is. All for your delight
 We are not here. That you should here repent you
 The actors are at hand; and by their show
 You shall know all that you are like to know. (5.1.108-117)

Rephrasing “all that you are like to know” as the ‘all that you need to know’ of doctrinal instruction suggested by *Pyramus and Thisbe*’s implicit doctrinal content (to which I will turn shortly), these two construals of the prologue represent two stances towards preaching and, by extension, the possibility of an edifying theatre. The first, the “good fellowship” model Jeffrey Knapp argues Jonson and followers adopted, preaches “to the ignorant and corrupt as well as to the enlightened and virtuous” following Paul’s accommodationist sensibility, pleasing rather than castigating, and avoiding offence via an Erasmian doctrinal minimalism (27-39). The second version inverts this stance, presenting players as a harsh priesthood willingly offending and demanding repentance, excusing their rudeness by the “good will” of salvific intention but tainted with a hypocritical sense of superiority and showiness, in a charismatic form of preaching. This stance is interpretable as a caricature of puritan ministry.

As the failure of the mechanicals’ project suggests, Shakespeare need not be seen as choosing between these two positions. Their fungibility through slight mispunctuation suggests the trickiness in distinguishing them in practice. While Knapp argues that Shakespeare is less willing to adopt the “good fellowship” model than Jonson for fear of encouraging antipuritan divisiveness (51), his privileging of Bottom over either Robin suggests a preference for a third way.⁸⁴ But presenting theatre as ministry is an ambivalent strategy. The identitarian duality of actor and character may create more

⁸⁴ cp Falstaff’s more morally dubious legibility as both “Goodfellow” and “grotesque” Puritan (cp. Poole, *Radical Religion*).

moral liabilities than it escapes, and a theatre that claims to be edifying may be subject to harsher controversies than a purely secular theatre.

Specifically, the staging problems faced by the mechanicals' performance – the potential fear aroused in women by a too-successful staging of the lion and Pyramus' suicide, and the potential failure of representations of moonlight and a wall to be convincing – can be read as theatrical reiterations of the controversies over ritual and edification; though Knapp focuses on the edifying role of ministry in particular, the puritan and the “Goodfellow” stances on edification imply related attitudes towards ministry's ritual components. The staging problems thus reiterate the problem of the play's framing within its representations in a way homologous to the *MND*'s wider mirroring of ritual practice in human and fairy worlds.

The general claim that the mechanicals play is a form of ministry is bolstered by Patricia Parker's suggestion that its content draws on the moralized Ovid tradition of reading *Pyramus and Thisbe* as an allegory of Christian doctrine, identifying Pyramus's death with Christ's (Parker, *Murals* 200ff; for more on this tradition see Happé 150-2). This tradition explains the resemblance between the artisan-actors' performance and the guild-sponsored mystery play tradition, which in this disguised way present similar material; it also justifies looking closely for scriptural echoes related to the problems of ritual practice in the performance.

Parker's suggestion that Peter Quince be read as Peter to Bottom's Paul makes Quince's concern that moonlight and a wall are “two hard things” (3.1.43) to represent echo 2 Peter 3:16's caution that Paul's epistles contain “some things ... hard to be understood” by the unlearned.⁸⁵ Yet a scriptural reading of the moon reveals two symbolic roles. The moon marks Jewish ritual feast days, disavowed by Paul as a shadow prefiguring the body of Christ (Col. 2:16-17), echoing Isaiah 1's disavowal of the empty ritual sacrifices on these lunar feasts. The moon is also an apocalyptic symbol, whose dimming figures

⁸⁵ Parker builds on the etymology connecting Quince via a carpenter's square to Peter's church corner (“(Peter) Quince”). Reading Bottom as Paul is supported by his theatrics and by Thisbe's calling Pyramus “most lovely Jew” (3.1.89); Paul calls himself “Hebrew of the Hebrews” in Phi. 3:5 and 2 Cor. 11:22.

the end of the world and whose brightness figures the resurrection that follows; a moon as bright as the sun signifies the church's restoration (Is. 30:26). When Pyramus thanks the moon for its "sunny beams" (5.1.266) at the beginning of his "passion" (281) and commands the moon to exit (299), he seems to translate Isaiah's prophecy into Christian terms, the moon's banishment allegorizing the Christian liberty earned by Christ's sacrifice. As for the play's wall, Parker has argued that, as in the moralized Ovid tradition, it evokes the "wall of partition" (Eph. 2:14), read by the Geneva Bible annotators as the ritual practices dividing Jew from Gentile. Parker also observes that the Ovidian wall was moralized as that of the Song of Songs, in turn read as an apocalyptic symbol, and emphasized the apocalyptic implications of the mystical marriage in the mechanicals' performance (*Murals* 200-204). Together therefore moon and wall are Pauline tropes for religious ritual whose Biblical heritage worries the social paradoxes of Christian liberty in the delay before the all-in-all of the second coming. The mechanicals use actors to represent these objects in an overzealous attempt to prevent carnal or literal understandings of these symbols for the avoidance of carnal attitudes to ritual.

On the other hand, the actors playing Pyramus and Lion announce that they are not really what they are pretending to be, instead naming themselves and their occupations (3.1.15-42, 5.1.221). This tactic seems designed to avoid two accusations: as preachers, of hypocrisy or sorcery, and as actors, of immoral personation. Pyramus and the Lion are moralized as Christ and the Devil (Happé 152,156; Parker *Murals* 202); impersonating either too closely is to claim an inappropriate power, and to perform a suicide is raised moral objections from anti-theatricalists. By reminding the audience of their mundane identities the actors attempt to pre-empt both sets of accusations.⁸⁶

In other words, in addition to trying to defend themselves against the anti-theatricalists, the two thrusts of the actors' representational solutions also try to avoid pitfalls on both sides of the conformist-puritan divide over appropriate preaching styles and edifying practices – arid doctrinal delivery, idolatrous shows, hypocrisy. The final result is very

⁸⁶ See Shell for a recent survey of anti-theatricalism.

wrong, but like Hooker's reframing of the puritan-conformist debate, the play frames this attempt to preach the gospel within a broader view of the natural world, the deeper reality embodied by the fairies. Compared to its role in the broader play, the mechanicals' handling of the moon is aesthetically unsatisfying because it is emotionally and naturally implausible, treated as an arbitrary token to be interpreted by allegory. Through this theatrical embedding, both the moralized Ovid method of anagogy and purely symbolic interpretations of the sacraments are revealed as unworkable because they are indifferent to the natural and affective world they represent and are embedded in.⁸⁷ In the last section I will suggest that Shakespeare envisions a theatre that edifies by appealing more naturally to the audience's feelings.

Bottom's final speech assures the audience that "the wall is down that parted their fathers" (5.1.345), asserting a charitable unity transcending Ephesians' ritual partition. Theseus however has already supplied his uncharitable interpretation of the wall's exit 140 lines earlier, in the textual crux Parker builds on: "Now is the morall down between the two neighbours" (Folio) or "Now is the moon used between the two neighbours" (Quarto).⁸⁸ Both lines suggest the lovers' impure intentions, revealing Theseus's cynicism and intolerance of the play's devices. Despite Bottom's hopes for an audience united by their common understanding of the play's charitable moral, Theseus's mixture of aesthetic and moral condescension exemplifies how the performance divides the participants along lines of gender, class, and hermeneutic, reifying the debates about the social implications of ritual. This is the subject of my last two sections.

7 Hermeneutics of charity and condescension

At the conclusion of her discussion of eucharistic thought applied to mystical and political bodies, Regina Schwartz has observed that

⁸⁷ Compare Knapp's claim that *Henry V* draws attention to the material inadequacy of theatre to represent Christ, emphasizing the spirit's operation as in Protestant eucharistic theory (115-140). Knapp argues that *Henry V* critically compares the clergy's attempts to edify to theatrical efforts.

⁸⁸ Usually editors rewrite the line to read "now is the wall down" (5.1.205), obscuring Theseus's cynicism.

When stripped of its mystical sense, even the Eucharist ... refers to identity, one that forges insiders, with corporate shared values, and outsiders who do not share them. The restoration of the sacramental mystery to any substantialist vision can be a vital corrective to idolatry ... a restoration of an ethics that exceeds the politics of identity. (35)

Though testing the possibilities of drama to correct idolatry, in the absence of a sacramental mystery, the mechanicals fail in the ways Schwartz describes. The male aristocratic audience forge a community of insiders excluding the women among them and the actors in front of them through aesthetic and social condescensions. Given their sense of superiority, there is no question of mystery or even of offence in the performance. Yet the actors fear giving offence, at least to the women, indicating the complexity that Paul's weak/strong dichotomy can be mapped at the same time onto both gender and class difference. In these circumstances, the actors must preach both up and down.

In these terms the male aristocrats perform their strength by condescension to the actors, mocking their aesthetic and sexual virility, while the actors perform their strength to the women by their expression of "the most tender concern for female delicacy ... in words conveying the grossest insinuation of female indelicacy" (Franke 286). For example, the prologue slyly advises "let no man wonder" why Pyramus and Thisbe are "content to whisper" through the wall (5.1.132-3), after which Thisbe's lament that "my cherry lips have often kissed thy stones / Thy stones with lime and hair knit up in thee" (5.1.189-90) sounds like a frustrated confession of pre-marital oral sex (and a bawdy travesty of Paul's "living stones" united by love). Through their condescensions, male actors and aristocrats both violate Paul's warnings to the Corinthians against antinomianism, transgressions of verbal and sexual mores premised on their own spiritual superiority. If there is an explicit counterpoint to this pattern of classed- and gendered- condescension in the performance scene, it is, as has long been recognized in criticism, embodied in Hippolyta, particularly in her contrast with Theseus. If at the beginning of the play Theseus and Hippolyta representing conflicting principles of governance or political theology, at the end of the play their arguments limn parallel schisms about ritual practice.

Like the actors' ambiguous apologies, Theseus's condescension reveals how claims to charitable interpretation can mask uncharitable intensions. Before the play itself, Theseus has already condescended twice, by imputing to the lovers an irrational idolatrous tendency in interaction of imagination and perception (in his "lunatic, lover, and poet" speech (5.1.2-22)), and in his claim to understand in inferiors only appropriate deference no matter the incoherence of speakers fearful of his audience (5.1.89-105). But during the performance, Theseus gleefully uses claims of charity and rationality to provoke fear, suggesting the hypocrisy of those claims. For example, as Richard Wilson has observed, his supposedly rationalist or literalist claim that "the man [in the moon] should be put into the lantern" (5.1.236-250) is a threat to hang both Starveling and the figure of rebellion the man in the moon represented ("in the lantern" meant to be hung from a post) ("Kindly Ones" 209-10).⁸⁹ Theseus's hermeneutic is an interpretive absolutism, at once childishly suspicious and clumsily threatening, and too insensitive to distinguish the intentions and individuality of the speaker. Read as a prescription for religious observance, Theseus's hermeneutic position is close to Whitgift and Bancroft's spiritual quietism (Lake 38-42, 126-9); he recognizes the political convenience of ritual and demands its subservient conduct without inquiring into participants' inner spiritual lives. He also denies the spiritual significance of collective religious experience. His lack of concern for the actors as human beings reveals this position's hypocrisy.

Hippolyta more guardedly, but consistently, insists on the relevance of intentions. After the wall's disappearance, Theseus apologizes that "The best in this kind are but shadows, and the worst are no worse if imagination amend them" (201-11), but Hippolyta counters that "It must be your imagination, then, and not theirs" (213). Theologically, Hippolyta's position is closer to Hooker's understanding of ceremony, in avoiding purely subjective interpretations. Nevertheless, her respect of intentions is grounded not in identity politics

⁸⁹ cp. Theseus's disputatious advice to the wall, which, after Bottom curses his stones for denying him bliss, "being sensible, should curse again" (5.1.181). Bottom firmly refuses, moving the plot along in his charitable style.

but in individuality. Both can appreciate lesser beings, like their hunting dogs,⁹⁰ but while Hippolyta recalls her hounds' braying uniting nature into a "mutual cry" of "musical ... discord" (4.1.117), Theseus praises his for being "matched in mouth like bells" and "tuneable" (4.1.122-3). Just as the play evokes a sermon, the music of the hounds suggests prayer, but Theseus and Hippolyta differ in the type of unity in worship they expect.⁹¹ Hippolyta's greater tolerance of discord permits individualized concessions. After Pyramus's death, Theseus coldly observes that "this passion, and the death of a dear friend, would go near to make a man look sad" (5.1.281-2), but Hippolyta admits a different feeling: "Beshrew my heart, but I pity the man" (5.1.284). Acknowledging not the character Pyramus but the actor Bottom, rewarding the actors' insistence on their names and occupations, her pity recognizes another human being.⁹² Hippolyta doesn't pretend the performance is good, but neither does she mock it mercilessly. She is a more truly charitable interpreter of flawed theatre, of bad ceremony.⁹³

But Hippolyta's pity still condescends. Though more dignified than Titania's, directed towards a "mother's son" (the actors' catchphrase) it also uses the maternal to resist patriarchy. Hippolyta's aloofness from the heckling suggests that her pity extends also to the male aristocrats; it is a gendered but bivalent emotional accommodation, directed downward to the actors and upward to her husband. Like charity, pity can accommodate differences of social status and spiritual maturity within a church, but it can also create surprising subjective inversions of more objective forms of hierarchy.

⁹⁰ cp. Robin Goodfellow's phrasing his meddling as animal husbandry; Titania's affair with the metamorphosed Bottom; Helena's self-description as spaniel. Booth appreciates the dog imagery.

⁹¹ Theseus also frames the hunting as a display to please his bride, perhaps a distraction; Hippolyta's reminiscence of hunting with Hercules and Cadmus has a much grander scale and sense of purpose.

⁹² Franke reads the actors' catchphrase "every mother's son" as a male boast of virility, but it's also a defensive claim of a humanity which demands pity. Hippolyta's pity inverts Ariel's advice to Prospero that granting pity defines humanity.

⁹³ Compare Knapp's reading *Henry V's* chorus's request for the audience's pity for their inadequate representations as a form of spiritual aid and fellowship (135).

8 Humorous sacramentality or queer catharsis

Hippolyta's pity stands out against the play's silence on Hermia and Helena's responses to *Pyramus and Thisbe*. This is especially problematic given the play's allegorization of marriage: the moralized Ovid reading casts Pyramus as Christ to Thisbe's bride-church, presenting Christ's passion and sacrifice as a prelude to the church's consummation; but the performance's imagery and language, including the blood-stained mantle and Pyramus's malapropism that the lion has "deflowered" (5.1.286) Thisbe, present a physical understanding of marriage.⁹⁴ The lovers' mutual suicide thus yokes together two sacrifices, eucharist and defloration, and the mechanicals seem to imply that women weakly fear both. Whether read sacramentally or through Paul's ideal of mutual edification, this fearfulness is an obstacle to church unity, which demands more positive forms of feeling developing through time in relation to each individual's spiritual maturation.⁹⁵ Theories of the private and collective role of the sacraments recognize the accompanying role of the feelings, but vary in their balancing of private or collectively-directed feelings and imaginations.⁹⁶ In any case the play is not a magic eyedrop or humoral purge, and Hermia and Helena's affective responses to it are obscure.

Jennifer Waldron's recent *Reformations of the Body* helps frame the mechanicals' representational contortions as arguing for greater religious sensitivity not only to intentions but also to individual affective response. Waldron identifies a tendency in Calvin and many English reformers which "enchants" the body as a lively and natural

⁹⁴ On other defloration imagery in the play cp. Wiles 58-61, Montrose 172-5, Carroll 163ff. Montrose observes that the play conflates menstruation, a sign of female generative power and threat to male purity, with defloration, a sign of men's mastery. Because the play couples both to lunar symbolism, this is another case of the weak/strong paradox mapped onto female sexuality.

⁹⁵ Waldron's description of the distribution of sensations among actors and audience in *MND* as post-Reformation phenomenology is a related phenomenon, but says little directly about emotions ("The Eye of Man" 406-410). These emotional and spiritual transformations are the only ones the play ultimately permits – despite the temporary Ovidian counterexample of Bottom's metamorphosis. Carroll (141-177) stresses the emotional, as opposed to physical, character of most of the play's metamorphoses, intriguingly observing the omission of the final metamorphosis of Pyramus and Thisbe (163-7).

⁹⁶ This problem predates Hooker and Perkins; compare for example Augustine's view that the sacraments help establish bonds of charity to the *Book of Common Prayer*'s demand that all communicants be in a prior relation of charity.

image because of its divine origin and contrasts this with humanly created dead images, physical or mental. Anti-theatricalists thus fear playgoers' deception by the lively bodies of actors playing out idolatrous (since human-authored) narratives. For example, Gosson argues from the prohibition on eating idolothytes to a prohibition on theatrical representations of pagan gods; Prynne argues that theatre defiles the body, senses, and souls of all participations, depriving them of grace and incorporating them into Satan's body rather than Christ's. These arguments are negative versions of eucharistic beliefs that suggest bodily action can alter the substantial identity of players or audience members regardless of their intentions (74-77). I would argue that here Shakespeare develops a counter-argument that emphasizes the role of intention and, by depicting theatrical failure, denies the automatic effects of bodily action in the theatre. Just as Bottom's experience in the woods, *pace* Gosson, draws on Pauline ambiguity about idolothytes and Christian liberty, and Hippolyta, unlike Theseus, respects Bottom's intentions, the transition from a focus on sacraments to one on edification allows a more subjectivist understanding of theatrical ritual. If the mechanicals insist on revealing the "lively images" of their bodies underlying the wall and moon which threaten to be worshipped as dead ones, they also invite their audience to translate their human-authored plot into a divinely-authored one, that of Christ's passion. Representation is thus an accommodation to human capacities, and human reception and re-enactment of Christ's sacrifice is mediated by individual experience; both Pyramus and Lion use their own names, not Christ's or Satan's.

Nonetheless, the contrast between the experience in the woods and the experience of watching the play is a starting point for understanding the women's emotional dynamics. Theseus endorses playgoers' corrective use of the imagination, but suspects its unregulated role in the woods, famously dismissing the "shaping fantasies" of the "lovers and madmen" "that apprehend more than cool reason ever comprehends" (5.1.4-6) and "the poet's pen" that "gives to airy nothing / A local habitation and a name" (5.1.15-17). He describes the local existence of spiritual realities as fictions produced by the imagination to justify emotional experience:

Such tricks hath strong imagination
 That if it would but apprehend some joy
 It comprehends some bringer of that joy;
 Or in the night, imagining some fear,
 How easy is a bush supposed a bear (5.1.18-22)

The language of “airy nothing,” recalling the mechanicals’ just prior play on paragon/paramour (and, I’ve argued, paraclete) as “a thing of nought” (4.2.14), suggests arguments about the real “local” presence in the Eucharist. But his stress is on the broader idolatrous impulse of the individual imagination to materialize intangible feelings, and Hippolyta’s claim that “their minds transfigured so together” guarantees the “constancy” of something “strange and admirable” is a defence not of local presence itself but of collective emotional experience, like the affective role of collective worship valued by Hooker (Lake 164ff).

In broadening the terrain of argument, Theseus’s wariness resonates with Calvin’s discussion in 1.5 of the *Institutes* of God’s presence perceived in nature.⁹⁷ Against Theseus, Calvin insists that the imagination itself, the ability to invent, to survey earth and heaven, or to dream, proves the divine presence in humanity; to perceive these divine gifts without acknowledging their giver or ‘bringer’ is preposterous. Calvin however shares Theseus’s suspicions of the human tendency to replace the divine giver with idiosyncratic idolatrous fantasies.⁹⁸ If Theseus encourages imaginative responses to theatre it is because he thinks they are uniformly controllable by inverting the process, using personation to produce a preconceived feeling. Therefore, compared to the woods, the theatre demands a shift in emphasis from spiritual presence to its affective correlates, the feelings like joy or fear it engenders or, conversely, which make its perception possible, and which the theatre may ideally control. What else distinguishes theatre from nature if the spirit is present everywhere? These feelings and their use to edify concern the mechanicals more than real presence.⁹⁹ Again, Hippolyta is somewhere between

⁹⁷ Or Luther’s view of the real presence in nature; see Strier.

⁹⁸ I thank Irene Grace Bom for suggesting this passage.

⁹⁹ Compare Knapp’s analysis of *Henry V* (115-140), which seeks eucharistic effects rather than edifying ones.

Thesus and the mechanicals; against both Calvin and Theseus, Hippolyta's tolerance of discord and her belief that the Athenians' disparate testimonies reflect a deeper constancy implies a tolerance also of disparities in affective response which legitimizes rather than dismisses individual spiritual experience within a collectivity. Her view is more amenable to a Pauline corporate church than Theseus's cold conformity.

While *Pyramus and Thisbe* is sometimes taken as a "comic detoxification" of the frightening events in the woods (Carroll 163),¹⁰⁰ the contrast between the two may therefore be better read as a recognition of the range of affective spiritual experiences involved not only in perceiving the Eucharist, but in recreating Christ's sacrifice more generally.¹⁰¹ The distinction between re-enacting the passion and the defloration of the mystical bride is one example of this differential experience expressed as a differential distancing from Christ's original sacrifice.¹⁰² Yet given Hermia and Helena's demonstrated willingness to suffer, spiritually and materially, the mechanical's condescensions are absurd; their play can conjure nothing matching the emotional intensity of the long night in the woods.

Read as a failed tragedy, one turned comic both by its Christian redemptive coding and by its failures in performance, Aristotle's theory of catharsis may further clarify the play's religious dimensions. Neo-Latin biblical tragedy exploited the links between the word *katharsis* and its conjugates in the Greek New Testament, including Christ's sacrifice and the mystical marriage's sacramental purifications (Shuger, *Renaissance Bible* 128ff).¹⁰³ The comic temporal distortions of *MND* reverse both conventions of

¹⁰⁰ Wiles suggestively reads *Pyramus and Thisbe* as a "burlesque" of a typical wedding masque, or an anti-masque treating in "negative image" the same "positive ideals" of the masque, but it is not clear to what effect, since these positive ideals are already quite sexually explicit (58-61). I suggest that the point is the risk that Hermia and Helena will take offence.

¹⁰¹ See for example Spinks 89-91; 151-2. Waldron's discussion of theatre's distributed phenomenology ("The Eye of Man") is suggestive of each participant's differential response to a given ritual, religious or theatrical.

¹⁰² Donne's *Epithalamion made at Lincoln's Inn* collapses this difference by satirically presenting the bride as herself the Eucharistic lamb to be 'embowelled' by her husband on the altar-bed.

¹⁰³ Shuger focuses on daughter-sacrifice in George Buchanan's *Jephthah*; Protestant polemical interpretations of the daughter as a "proto-nun" (137), or Shuger's reading of Buchanan's daughter as a

spiritual superiority and Aristotle's emotional dynamics; while the Athenian women in the play feel fear in the woods, they likely, with Hippolyta, pity their husbands, who seem to have learned nothing from their experience. The women's willingness to (however ambivalently) sacrifice themselves in marriage is spiritually superior to the men's near-murder of each other,¹⁰⁴ and the men's cruelty as audience members is rather bathetic. Like the comic effects of mistiming in the supposedly tragic *Pyramus and Thisbe* – particularly, as a mise-en-abyme, the phase, appearance, and disappearance of Moonshine – the broader play's distribution of feelings and spirituality in time and among the characters makes for whatever edifying unity is salvageable among its unequally spiritually-developed characters. Tragedy thus turned comic through mistiming salvages a failed sacramentality by making it edifying. Rather than emphasizing a particular sacramental, cathartic, moment, the entire play becomes a distributed marriage ceremony with a productive ambiguity about any part's specific function.¹⁰⁵

As audience members Hermia and Helena may then again perform their spiritual superiority to their husbands at a moment that shades into their wedding nights. Their experience in the woods has demonstrated that spiritual presence is everywhere and spiritual suffering always available. If theatre can create the emotional conditions making this spirituality accessible, it may be for either sacramental or edifying purposes. While the play has all along linked sacramentality to fertility (which itself may be

type of Christ (148-9), evoke the particular problems of *Midsummer*, and form a pattern which Hermia's oath on "the fire which burned the Carthage queen" (1.1.173-4) is all too aware of.

¹⁰⁴ cp. Schwartz's reading of Desdemona's death in *Othello* manifesting the desire to re-enact the eucharist as a scene of justice, complicated by the Protestant argument that only God can sacrifice and human re-enactments are merely murder (*Sacramental Poetics* Ch. 3).

¹⁰⁵ cp. Alison Shell's suggestion that Shakespeare's late tragicomedy reflects an emerging English resistance to harsh Calvinism, and citation of the tragicomic theorist Guarini's claims as to the irrelevance of catharsis to Christians (198ff); my chapter presents *Midsummer* as an early and perhaps more theologically explicit example of this strategy structured less by soteriological than ritual concerns.

affected by feelings),¹⁰⁶ the play explicitly moves away from fertility in its final turn to hermeneutics and claimed desire to please.¹⁰⁷ Because of this final distancing from sacramental representation, the play's defence of theatre ultimately rests on a theory of edification, with its increased room for subjectivity, not on the involuntary or embodied sacramentality that Waldron describes. If, for example, at the end of *The Winter's Tale* audience members are asked to turn a dead image of Hermione into a live one through by exercising their faith (83), *MND* ends with the opposite demand on the audience, the defensive, yet spiritually significant, dismissal of theatre as meaningless. Against Calvin and Theseus's fears of idolatry, or the receiving of offence, Oberon hopes that after the spell is removed from the lovers, "all this derision / Shall seem a dream and fruitless vision" (3.2.370-1). Robin similarly apologizes at the end of the play:

If we shadows have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended:
That you have but slumbered here,
While these visions did appear;
And this weak and idle theme,
No more yielding but a dream. (5.414-419)

Who in the audience will admit to being so spiritually immature as to be unable to perform this consolation themselves, neutering the experiences by interpreting them as harmless and yielding no fruit? Hermia and Helena may similarly perform their spiritual maturity by simply refusing to take offence.¹⁰⁸ On the other hand, if the plays do not offend, the implication (as the blessing of the beds hopes) is that they may in fact be fruitful, perhaps through the comic/erotic pleasure they generate in their audience; at least they may be edifying, if not sacramental. However these spiritual fruits remain obscure, deferred, of the night, unpredictable as the effects of the moon.

¹⁰⁶ The Galenic/Hippocratic two-seed theory (as opposed to the Aristotelian one-seed theory Theseus advances in the first scene) makes women's fertility dependent on the imagination and feelings, particularly sexual pleasure (McLaren 13-29). Valerie Traub (77-124) describes the misogynist abuse of these ideas.

¹⁰⁷ To the desire to please, cp. Schwartz, end of chapter 3, suggesting ways theatre can offer cathartic re-enactments of sacrifice motivated by Reformation eucharistic theology.

¹⁰⁸ This suggestion suspiciously comes from Oberon and Robin Goodfellow, two unreliable dramatists. It also may place an unfair burden on the offended.

Chapter 2 - Lunacy after Galileo: Gender, Secularization, and the New Philosophy in *The Duchess of Malfi*

1 On matter and vision: Kepler and Galileo between sympathy and mechanism

Though set just before the Reformation, *The Duchess of Malfi* announces its scientific concerns by dropping two conspicuously anachronistic names, Galileo and Paracelsus.¹⁰⁹

I will discuss the dramatic contexts in the next section. This prelude describes an intellectual context in which these names represent contrasting paradigms for understanding both vision and matter, and how the lunar observations could be seen to force a choice between these paradigms.

At a glance these figures seem to represent entirely different eras and sensibilities.

Paracelsus stands for a premodern intellectual system based on astrological influence and efficacious resemblance or natural sympathy; Galileo stands for a modern mathematical physics and astronomy. This cartoon is familiar, but the details have been phrased in a variety of forms. Foucault's *The Order of Things* posited an *episteme*, a sort of subconscious epistemological figure underlying the human arts of biology, economics, and linguistics, changing from the Renaissance order of "similarity" – for which Foucault used the Paracelsus as his model – to the classical order of "representation," in which the ordering of signs creates meaning. But somewhat perversely (likely because he took it as a given) Foucault avoided a discussion of the explicit physical and epistemological

¹⁰⁹ *The Duchess of Malfi* is based the murder of the historical Duchess of Amalfi in 1513 with her husband Antonio, and situates itself in that period. While Boklund identifies several anachronisms in Webster's play deriving from his combination of sources, they concern early 16th-c military battles mentioned in passing.

Paracelsus, though alive, was a nobody in 1513; Galileo was fifty years unborn. The play was first staged between 1612 and 1614, at a period when Galileo's lunar observations were current and his controversy with Scheiner about sunspots was just completed or ongoing. The text, advertising unspecified unperformed scenes, was published in 1623, the year Galileo published *The Assayer*.

The play's dedication to George Harding, Baron Barkeley stresses learning as the modern form of nobility; cp. section 8. As the dedicatee of the 1621 edition of Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Barkeley may have had topical interests. I will repeatedly return to the play's treatment of melancholy and Burton's interpretations of it in this chapter.

theories underlying these supposed changes.¹¹⁰ More recently, Stuart Clark's *Vanities of the Eye* has emphasized the *visual* locus of a related epistemic shift, stressing the pervasive sense of visual uncertainty in the period. Clark grounds his broader study of cultural change in the very specific scientific difference between a medieval Aristotelian theory of visual perception based on qualities inherent in matter that are conveyed via emanative *species* to the sensory faculties of the soul and (partly following Richard Tuck) the "solution" to the problem of visual veracity in a non-Aristotelian world-without-qualities adopted by the Mersenne circle (particularly Descartes and Hobbes).¹¹¹ In this new world-without-qualities, vision was merely a causal phenomenon, and knowledge of the world was obtained by understanding the conventional correlations of perceptions with each other, not by the transmission of essences (or *species* resembling them) into the mind. Though Clark has little to say about Galileo, Richard Tuck links the Mersenne Circle's visual theories to Galileo's suggestion of a mechanical ontology in his 1623 *The Assayer* where he however explicitly refrained from presenting a visual theory (Tuck 286-7).

I will argue less ambitiously here that developments in visual theory and the epistemological controversies related to Galileo's observations are crucial for situating the *The Duchess of Malfi* in its post-Galilean but pre-Cartesian intellectual moment, which spans the dates between its first possible performance in 1612 and its first publication in 1623. Galileo, Hobbes, and Descartes's mutual gravitation toward a theory of matter without qualities suggests a tendency to link ontology and epistemology; in the context of secularization arguments, physical and epistemic disenchantment tend to be correlated but not always coincident. In the emerging *physical* spectrum between an enchanted universe governed by sympathetic forces and astrological influences and the mechanical universe, Galileo leans strongly towards mechanism, while Kepler is more

¹¹⁰ Foucault mentions Galileo in passing only once (330) and never mentions Kepler, preferring to use Descartes to represent all things mechanical – though he gives no details.

¹¹¹ Clark describes a range of cultural phenomena (demonology, painting, Reformation, skepticism) contributing to the undermining of confidence in the old theory. His chapter 10 treats vision's importance to Hobbes and Descartes's mechanical ontologies.

ambivalent. This is somewhat paradoxical given Galileo's evident ignorance when he published the *The Starry Messenger* of Kepler's visual and optical theory which itself has been seen as a powerful agent of *epistemic* disenchantment.¹¹²

Kepler's analysis in his 1604 *Optics* of the focusing properties of lenses and the production of the retinal image has been seen by many historians of science as the "mechanization of vision" preliminary to Hobbes's and Descartes's epistemic reorientations. While medieval perspectivist theories of vision had used versions of geometric optics to trace the path of light through the eye, they had not achieved Kepler's understanding of the lens's focusing abilities and the retinal image. They instead appealed to the concept of visual *species* developed by Robert Grosseteste and Roger Bacon, emanations carried into the eye conveying or imprinting all the qualities of the objects they originated from and accounting for visual perception (Lindberg, *Theories*; "Genesis"). Underlying the *species* theory was an Aristotelian understanding of matter as essentially bearing qualities. Moreover, for Bacon *species* were not only visual agents, but the agents of all physical causality. For thinkers after him like Ficino and John Dee, species were also the agents of astrological influence, magnetism, and radiated heat; *species* were also appropriated to act as agents of contagion (Pantin, "Fracastoro") and lovesickness (Beecher), and more generally to explain natural sympathy and antipathy (Floyd-Wilson 5-6; Clark, *Thinking With Demons* ch. 14). A crucial question for many interpreters has therefore been whether Kepler's *Optics* of 1604 entirely eliminated *species* theory. There is evidence for both positions in Kepler's writings. David Lindberg and Antoni Malet have argued that Kepler's visual theory – the part of his theory concerned with visual perception as opposed to image formation – preserved aspects of Neoplatonic light metaphysics, and even Isabelle Pantin, who adopts the mechanist position and argues that Kepler only uses the word *species* to refer to motions in the visual spirit in the optic nerve behind the retina, observes that two of Kepler's supposed

¹¹² Kepler's published response, *Conversations with the Starry Messenger* (1610), criticized Galileo's silence on Kepler's optical (and other) work.

followers, the Jesuits Scheiner and Aguilonius, preserve *species* in their optical treatises (*“Simulachrum”*).

Stuart Clark perhaps identifies the relevant issue most clearly when he stresses that for Kepler “the camera obscura was the model for the formation of retinal images, not for vision as such” (343) or for subsequent cognition, which still took place in the “common sense” using the old cognitive principles of “visual judgements based on the principle of the simulacrum” (343). Moreover, as Lindberg (*“Genesis”*) observes, Kepler’s optical writings cannot be separated from his astronomical writings, and in both the role of the interpreting mind is intermingled with physical causality. Kepler’s theory of astrology coupled the influence of *species* to an agential intelligence measuring the angles between planets, and his *New Astronomy* of 1609 similarly mixed a *species* acting as the motive virtue of the planets with a planetary intelligence estimating the sun’s distance by the apparent size of the solar disc. His replacement of *species* with light may have mechanized optics, but rather than mechanizing the universe, Kepler’s tendency seems to have been to spread mind throughout it.¹¹³

Galileo, on the other hand, repeatedly mocked the tendency to enchant the universe as a kind of intellectual obfuscation. Clearly he felt that he was doing something different from a Paracelsian, and throughout his mature career expressed hostility to occult theories of sympathy. In his pre-telescopic 1607 response to plagiarism of his work on the geometrical and military compass by Baldessar Capra, he attacked Capra for treating the device as if it operated on “secret” Paracelsian principles, rather than geometrical and visual ones:

If by “secret” he means something enormous and miraculous, as, for example, the secret of curing a wound from afar simply by anointing either the weapon that hurt someone or a bandage with his blood ... I not only have not regarded these rules of measurement as marvels, but I have always believed, and continue to believe, that such stunning things would not be found anywhere in mathematics ... And if

¹¹³ cp. Raz Chen-Morris and Ofer Gal’s claim that Kepler’s replacement of *species* by light was motivated by the desire to guarantee the visual reliability of distant observations used in the new astronomy at the expense of general visual veracity (*Baroque Science* 20-26).

finally by “secret” he means to suggest something new and unusual, I can certainly believe that many of my procedures are such, and above all those whose laborious calculations I myself have removed, such that they are resolved with just the compass and the Arithmetic Lines [that is, markings] I have provided, in a fashion never previously imagined by others. (qtd. in Reeves, *Galileo’s Glassworks* 107)

Galileo here distinguishes the archetypal Paracelsian cure, the “weapon salve,” from his compass’s geometrical operations, though he calls the magical processes “rules of measurement,” implicitly treating them not only as causal but as epistemic modes comparable to geometry.

I’ve taken this quote from Eileen Reeves’ book *Galileo’s Glassworks*; in her earlier study of Galileo’s interaction with painters, *Painting the Heavens*, Reeves summarizes Galileo’s frequent hostility to artistic techniques that confuse substance and representation. In his 1612 *Letters on the Sunspots* for example he opposes painters like Arcimboldo, “who occasionally constrain themselves, for sport, to represent a human face or something else by throwing together now some agricultural implements, again some fruits, or perhaps the flowers of this or that season.” Galileo presents this artistic fad as an analogy for Aristotelians who constrain themselves to explain all of the book of nature from within Aristotle’s pages, and it follows a justification of his writing in the Tuscan vernacular, which he claims is as universally expressive as Latin (Galilei and Scheiner 256-7). In other words, Galileo favours a medium, whether artistic, linguistic, or conceptual, which if not fundamentally transparent, should at least be suited to its subject-matter. Against the *Arcimboldisti* he praises his friend Cigoli by name, the first painter of an immaculate conception showing the Virgin Mary standing on a pitted Galilean moon. In his 1632 *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems* he opposes similar artistic techniques like Mexican feather art and stone inlay:

a painter, from the various simple colors placed on his palette, by gathering a little of this with a bit of that and a trifle of the other, depicts men, plants, buildings, birds, fishes, and in a word represents every visible object, *without any eyes or feathers or scales or leaves or stones being on his palette*. Indeed, it is necessary that none of the things imitated nor parts of them should actually be among the colors, if you want to be able to represent everything; *if there were feathers, for instance, these would not do to depict anything but birds or feather dusters*. (qtd. in Reeves, *Painting* 7)

Reeves observes that Galileo associated this use of inlaid stones or other materials with an “unscientific spirit” related to occult theories of sympathy. But again the context is a critique of Aristotelians, who build all of their systems out of Aristotle’s texts; rather than writing a cento out of Virgil or Ovid, Galileo’s mouthpiece Sagredo will use the alphabet to make his own philosophical system, and presents the painter’s palette as an analogy (Galilei, *Dialogue* 126-7). While Galileo insists that the material of representation – pigment, colour, light – is different from the material represented, this aesthetic judgement is mobilized metaphorically to criticize Aristotelian conceptual limitations, and, I would suggest, reflexively, to criticize the Aristotelian epistemology based on resemblance and the Aristotelian ontology of matter bearing qualities. *Species* are implicitly dismissed. Representational power does not rest in the thing represented, but in the mind of the beholder. That mind must be supple enough to capture its subject, but this suppleness is not guaranteed.

These epistemological claims and their relationship to ontology are made more explicit in Galileo’s 1623 *The Assayer*, the culmination of a five-year controversy debating whether the dramatic comets of 1618 were substantial bodies or mere optical illusions, which expanded to address the operation of the telescope and the nature of matter and sensory qualities themselves. In this work Galileo again dismisses occult qualities and sympathies in favour of precise geometric descriptions associated with his famous statement that the book of nature contains philosophy written in the language of mathematics.¹¹⁴ Moreover he develops a precise statement denying the objective existence of sensory qualities, precisely the information *species* were supposed to carry:

I do not believe that for exciting in us tastes, odors, and sounds there are required in external bodies anything but sizes, shapes, numbers, and slow or fast movements; and I think that if ears, tongues, and noses were taken away, shapes and numbers and motions would remain but not odors or tastes or sounds. These, I believe, are nothing

¹¹⁴ See Galilei, *The Controversy* 195-8. Galileo geometrically refutes Sarsi’s suggestion that irregular eccentric or elliptical motions could produce apparent vertical motion. Though truly irregular motion can save any appearance, motion that cannot be described mathematically is like “the sympathy, antipathy, occult properties, influences, and other terms employed by some philosophers as the cloak for the correct reply which would be ‘I do not know.’”

but names, apart from the living animal – just as ticking and titillation are nothing but names when armpits and the skin around the nose are absent. (*Controversy* 311)

Having compared touch, smell, taste, and hearing to the elements of earth, fire, water, and air, Galileo compares vision to light, but warns:

Of this sense and the matters pertaining to it, I pretend to understand but a trifle, and since a long time would still not suffice for me to explain that trifle – or even to hint at its explanation in writing – I pass this over in silence. (*Controversy* 312)

Though he is ultimately evasive on the nature of vision, driven to insist that his opponents in the comet debate have no way of telling whether the appearance of the comets is merely an optical illusion or not (231-3) (again his silence on Kepler's theory of the retinal image is somewhat ironic), Galileo here seems to propose what Margaret Osler has called a "non-essentialist epistemology" coupled to a Cartesian world of matter without qualities.

This non-essentialist epistemology is adumbrated in Galileo's earlier writing without being necessarily coupled to the Cartesian ontological claims implied by *The Assayer*. Gary Hatfield has argued that *The Assayer*'s account is less of a statement of ontology than stating parameters for "the type of scientific account we should aim to give to all material interactions, including those between external objects and sense organs," which he characterizes as Archimedean (132-4). As evidence, Hatfield appeals partly to Galileo's *Letters on Sunspots* published in 1613, in which Galileo argues that determining the essence of the sunspots is as impossible as determining the essence of even nearby objects, and that all one can do is understand certain of their properties such as "location, motion, shape, size, opacity, mutability, generation, and dissolution"; Hatfield characterizes these properties as essentially geometric (132). Though the consideration of the moon or sunspots through the telescope might imply an uncertainty about distant object's substance, Galileo explicitly denies the relevance of distance in determining essences:

I consider investigating the essence of the nearest elementary substances an undertaking no less impossible and a labor no less vain than that of the most remote and celestial ones. And I seem to be equally ignorant of the substance of the Earth as of that of the Moon, of earthly clouds, and of the spots of the Sun. Nor do I see that,

in understanding these nearby substances, we have any advantage other than the abundance of details; all are equally unknown, and we wander through them, passing from one to the other with little or no acquisition [of knowledge]. And if, upon inquiring into the substance of clouds, I am told that it is a moist vapor, I will then wish to know what vapor is. Perhaps I will be informed that it is water, attenuated by virtue of warmth and thus dissolved into vapor, but being equally uncertain of what water is, I will in asking about this finally hear that it is that fluid body flowing in rivers and that we constantly handle and use. But such information about water is merely closer and dependent on more [of our] senses, but not more intrinsic than [the information] I had earlier about clouds. And likewise I do not understand any more of the true essence of Earth or of fire than I do that of the Moon or of the Sun. *Such knowledge is available to our comprehension when we enter the state of beatitude, and not before then.* But if we want to limit ourselves to learning certain properties, it does not seem to me that we need despair of grasping these in the most remote bodies any more than in the closest ones. At times, indeed, such knowledge will be more exact in the former than in the latter. And who does not know the periods of the motions of the planets better than he does that of the waters of sundry seas? Who does not know that the spherical figure of the Moon was recognized much earlier and more quickly than that of the Earth? And is there not still a controversy over whether the Earth itself remains immobile or wanders, while [at the same time] we are quite certain of the motions of not a few stars? I want to conclude from this that although one would attempt the investigation of the substance of the solar spots in vain, this does not mean that certain of their properties—their location, motion, shape, size, opacity, mutability, appearance, and disappearance—cannot be learned by us and then serve as our means better to speculate upon other more controversial conditions of natural substances. (Galilei and Scheiner 254-5; italics added)

While Galileo treats close objects as generally easier to investigate because more of the senses can be brought to bear on them, essences remain fundamentally unreachable. Galileo's deferral of knowledge of essences until the afterlife is partly a strategic deference to ecclesiastical authority (he explicitly allows his interlocutor, the Jesuit Scheiner, this freedom to speculate; for example see Galilei and Scheiner 104-5), but it is also characteristic of his methodological suspicion of Aristotelian arguments from essences. Oddly, though Kepler's theory of vision implied that regular vision worked on the same principle as vision aided by a telescope (and therefore visual inspection of near objects provided no more reliable information than that of far objects), Galileo does not here seem to have assimilated Kepler's arguments. Therefore this may be an argument for a non-essentialist epistemology built on principles independent of Kepler's. In any case it shows that Galileo's published work even at the beginning of the period we are considering could suggest a disenchanted epistemology, and that by the end of the period

his thought seemed to have moved towards stronger ontological claims verging on mechanism.

Galileo in his arguments about sunspots uses this deferral of essences in favour of properties to formulate a practical epistemology that may be called analogical or projective. His arguments about the nature of sunspots repeatedly construct an analogy between the sunspots and clouds, objects whose properties are familiar, though their essences are unknown (Galilei and Scheiner 98-101). Galileo uses similar metaphors in *The Starry Messenger*, describing lunar craters as the mountains surrounding Bohemia, and the lunar surface as cracked Venetian glass.¹¹⁵ There is a sense in which this non-essentialist epistemology of metaphor, analogy, or projection is repeatedly taken up and worried in the *Duchess of Malfi*, particularly as psychological projection. I will discuss one example in the next section and suggest a more systematic approach subsequently.

As this survey of Galileo and Kepler's positions suggests, part of the dispute over Galileo's lunar observations derived from the tight coupling of theories of matter and vision in early modern physics and epistemology, both of which were fundamentally in flux. There were at least two possible approaches to contesting Galileo's conclusions about the moon's bumpy surface. The first approach was to say that the optical phenomena were produced by an exotic configuration of substance that created an optical illusion; for example, the moon might be a diaphanous substance of varying density, or a bit of textured enamel encased in a perfect crystalline sphere (eg. Galilei and Scheiner 331). These arguments preserved the purity of the moon in a sense, but only with what may seem to us to be conceptual distortions.¹¹⁶ Another route was to attack the operation of the telescope or the visual process itself, either denying or ignoring Keplerian optics, or exploiting the new epistemic uncertainty implicit in Keplerian optics to argue that what was seen was not so easily interpretable (Galileo's much more careful

¹¹⁵ I owe this awareness of Galileo's metaphors to Erin Webster.

¹¹⁶ See Ariew ("Galileo's", "Initial") for a defence of the denial of Galileo's claims, based on traditional views of the moon, abhorrence of vacuum, and balance of probabilities. F. Wilson contests Ariew's defence, and Ariew responds.

optical arguments in *The Assayer* take up this strategy in discussing the nature of comets, in a move that has seemed perverse to some historians of science).¹¹⁷ But it is, I think, striking that some of the most prominent opposition tended to deny Keplerian optics and Galilean lunar claims together. For example, the Jesuits Aguilonius and Scheiner theorized the moon as cloud-like or crystalline, though of varying density or opacity (Reeves, *Painting* 197-205), and both preserved *species* in their theories of vision (Pantin, “Simulachrum” 257ff, 263ff).¹¹⁸

Though conservatism may explain some of this tendency to resist Keplerian optics and Galilean lunar claims together, it may be more easily understood given the coupling of matter and vision through the *species* theory. As already mentioned, *species* explained natural sympathies and antipathies along with the related phenomena of astrology and contagion; the naturalization of these phenomena was a major 16th- and 17th-century Aristotelian project (Clark, *Thinking* 214-233), and Aguilonius claimed to have identified over 600 distinct occult qualities (229-30)!¹¹⁹ I would suggest that in the first instance, the description of a bumpy and pitted moon apparently made out of matter no different than that of the earth could in a very striking way make it difficult to explain that most obvious of natural sympathies, the astrological phenomenon of lunar influence;¹²⁰ I will explore the gendered implications of this argument at length in the chapter. More generally, while it may have been possible to accept Kepler’s optics without rejecting

¹¹⁷ See Gal and Chen-Morris (“Galileo, the Jesuits”).

¹¹⁸ Their arguments about lunar substance derive from medieval commentaries on Aristotle and Averroes. Their premise is to deny that the lunar substance could be rough like the earth, and therefore reflect sunlight diffusely; because the even illumination of the moon is inconsistent with a smooth (mirror-like) reflective surface, the moon must transmit solar light, and its spots must be varying density or opacity. See Ariew (“Galileo’s”).

¹¹⁹ Floyd-Wilson (5-6) stresses the motive of distinguishing between demonic and non-demonic activity, and argues generally that “occult qualities” prompted the development of scientific methods of investigation. I am interested instead in the epistemic implications of *species* theory itself, which I see as more important for *The Duchess of Malfi*, though I will return to Floyd-Wilson’s demonological treatment of the play at the end of the chapter.

¹²⁰ Ariew (“Initial”) suggestively provides examples of astronomers who accepted Galileo’s Copernican suggestions but rejected his claims about the lunar substance. Robert S. Westman’s mammoth study of the Copernican debate stresses the centrality of astrology to both sides in the debate, suggesting its similar importance here; cp. my introduction.

species altogether, once *species* stopped being useful in explaining vision, they could easily lose their status as a privileged epistemic paradigm, as Clark's *Vanities of the Eye* argues generally. As Clark shows, this could reverberate into post-Reformation understandings of images, and Sven Dupré has argued that both Aguilonius and Scheiner preserved *species* because of their spiritually significant role in cognition, explaining the power of Jesuit meditation practice to link natural and spiritual knowledge. Following these general clues, I want to show in this chapter how for Webster the lunar observations become a site where the distinction widens between physical and epistemic enchantment – in other words, between sympathetic theories of matter and efficacious or resemblance-based theories of vision – opening a space to rethink the relationships between gender, affect, religious belief, and, surprisingly, political action.

2 Introduction: constancy and change

The preceding technical discussion has suggested how Paracelsus and Galileo can function as figureheads for two very different attitudes towards physics and epistemology, indeed for two entirely different ontologies. Certainly from Galileo's perspective, the Paracelsian development of theories of natural sympathy and efficacious resemblance could appear to demand Aristotelian theories of quality-bearing matter and perception based on resemblance and mediated by *species*. These ideas would appear, at least until later theorizations, to be incompatible with a mechanical ontology and a Keplerian theory of vision.¹²¹ But the names are revealing in the play not only for the scientific ideas they represent, but for the way they're used to exemplify a starkly misogynist double standard which essentializes female perfidy – or in one of the play's most marked phrasings of it, inconstancy – while framing male flaws, even the violent madness of lycanthropy, as transient and curable, in both cases regardless of the underlying ontological premises.

¹²¹ Paracelsian ideas roved far and wide the 16th and 17th-centuries, ranging from the use of chemical medicines by nominally Galenic practitioners who denied the majority of Paracelsian theory (Debus), to syncretic cosmologies and post-Aristotelian theories of matter. Maurice Hunt discusses the tension between Galenism and Paracelsianism in the play.

Though the doctor treating Ferdinand's lycanthropy initially provides a simple humoral explanation of the disease as excess melancholy (5.2.8-21), the scene quickly descends into anti-medical satire. His fear of Ferdinand's relapse prompts his citation of Paracelsus, explaining that he'll "go a nearer way to work with him / Than ever Paracelsus dreamed of. If / They'll give me leave, I'll buffet his madness out of him" (5.2.23-6). This "nearer way" of physical abuse is not quite Paracelsian action at a distance, and not quite the humoral violence of a Galenic purge. Though prescribing sympathetic cures for Ferdinand's symptoms of sunburn (a salamander's skin) and sore eyes (cockatrice's eggs), to get to the root of his problem the doctor attempts a psychic version of homeopathy, what he calls "mad tricks," a water fight with rose-water in urinals. While "tricks" were often prescribed for curing mental illnesses, particularly melancholy, they usually involved gently playing along with the deluded patients' belief and worked on the mind only.¹²² Yet though the doctor attempts to cure Ferdinand's violent madness by emulating it himself in a typical psychic cure, his therapy is tainted by its use of both physical violence and magical sympathy; he offers to beat Ferdinand, or with the rose-water urinals, to magically adjust humoral balance by moving around sweeter-smelling substitute fluids. These acrobatics reveal both a basic uncertainty about the nature of mental illness (its relationship to physiology, the ontology and epistemology underling its cure) but also an intense pressure to believe that Ferdinand is somehow curable.

While this pressure is no doubt also a result of the professional bias of the physician and the social pressures of Ferdinand's rank as a Duke, a gender bias becomes clear in comparison to the misogyny of the Cardinal's mention of Galileo. Defending himself from his mistress Julia's fear of his inconstancy, the Cardinal accuses her of projecting on him her own essential female inconstancy. For women, the Cardinal claims, "A man might strive to make glass malleable / Ere he should make them fixed," and gratuitously elaborates:

¹²² A textbook cure for the man who believes himself to be dead and under no obligation to eat is for the man's friends to claim that they are also dead and to eat anyway.

We had need go borrow that fantastic glass
 Invented by Galileo the Florentine,
 To view another spacious world i' th' moon,
 And look to find a constant woman there. (2.4.14-19)

In calling the moon “another spacious world,” the Cardinal fully acknowledges Galileo’s argument in the *Starry Messenger* that the moon was solid, bumpy, opaque, and similar in substance to the earth. In calling the glass “fantastic,” however, he indicates his skepticism of those claims. His misogyny may shape this interpretation, given the common belief in lunar influence over the minds and bodies of women explaining their supposed inconstancy; if Galileo’s observations were accepted, lunar influence would have to be reconsidered. But there are other reasons driving the Cardinal’s rejection, for example the tradition of iconography depicting one exceptional “constant woman,” the Virgin Mary, as the woman clothed in the sun and standing on the moon described in the book of Revelation; Eileen Reeves has described in detail the effects of Galileo’s observations on paintings of this genre (*Painting*), and the Cardinal’s use of glass imagery evokes the virginal crystalline spheres Galileo’s opponents projected onto the moon. The Cardinal himself seems uninterested in these philosophical and religious niceties; he is being sarcastic, and probably alluding to Ariosto’s imagining of the moon as the place of lost and imaginary ideal objects, a satirical reflection of the earth.¹²³ His point is that Julia, like all women – regardless of underlying ontology – is inconstant. Thus the Cardinal mobilizes himself against Galileo for misogynist ends, while being inscribed by Webster in a kind of anti-clerical satire, just as the doctor mobilizes himself against Paracelsus in a kind of professional competitiveness that is also (for the audience) a general anti-medical joke on him.

In this chapter I will argue that *The Duchess of Malfi* is a play about changing ontologies, specifically the epistemic and physical changes suggested by the lunar observations, but also about the religious, political and gendered corollaries of those changes. By corollary I do not mean to suggest a logical inevitability; *The Tempest*, the other post-Galilean play

¹²³ I thank Crystal Hall for this suggestion and for observing Galileo’s admiration for Ariosto. See her *Galileo’s Reading*.

I study in this thesis, presents a very different configuration of responses. I mean only that the play presents a package of ideas, tightly linked together, which appear to be mutually consistent and mutually reinforcing. Prompted by my opening examples, I will begin with the play's grappling with the idea of constancy, a trait both essentialized in its absence via the misogynist claim of perpetual female inconstancy, but also undergoing philosophical redefinition under the influence of Justus Lipsius' famous dialogue *On Constancy* (1584; Englished by John Stradling in 1595) and his and others' further elaborations of Neostoic political theory and ethics. These two approaches to constancy seem to present entirely different perspectives. The female body and mind, driven by the interior compulsions of the hysterical womb and the exterior compulsions of lunar influence, themselves linked in some obscure circuit, would seem almost entirely at the mercy of whimsical forces not their own, constantly inconstant. Neostoicism on the other hand hypothesizes an impermeable interior, a willing self able to abstract and withdraw from variable external forces – pain, suffering, political misfortune – and thereby free to act to change its circumstances, including through dissembling if need be.

There is one particularly dramatic juxtaposition of two approaches, significantly in a male body, Duke Ferdinand's. In act 2 scene 5, Ferdinand claims to have "digg'd up a mandrake," citing the superstition that pulling up a mandrake caused madness to explain his uncontrollable rage at obtaining proof of the Duchess's sexual activity; he and the Cardinal use humoral explanations of his rage alongside magical ones such as bewitching and the contamination of their sister's blood, though the Cardinal, a Machiavellian politician resembling the Neostoic, urges self-control. But in the very next scene (albeit in the play's chronology two of the Duchess's pregnancies later), Ferdinand seems to doubt Bosola's appeal to astrology and explicitly questions his claim that sorcery can explain the Duchess' sexuality. "Can your faith give way / To think there's power in potions, or in charms, / To make us love, whether we will or no?" (3.1.66-68) he asks, refusing Bosola's positive answer by asserting that all such claims to "force the will" are mere "gulleries" (3.1.70-73) of mountebanks, poisons causing madness. The love potions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are impossible, claims Ferdinand; the only "witchcraft lies in her rank blood" (3.1.78). Ferdinand's citation of "faith" is suggestive of the

theological problems in holding the will subject to magic, but Ferdinand's solution, essentializing the Duchess' corruption while implicitly and newly asserting his own freedom from impinging forces, is again no solution except for the rank misogynist.

The first part of my chapter will argue that the play suggests that Galileo's lunar observations tended to reduce the plausibility of any essential female inconstancy tied to lunar influence on the womb. Paradoxically, it does so by presenting a series of misogynist investigations of women which describe the relationship between women's faces and interiors, often troped as their wombs, in imagery drawn from the natural-philosophical debates over the relationship between the telescopic appearance of the lunar surface and the essence of the lunar substance. The play's misogynists present the culminating appearance of a spotted and corrupted moon as evidence for female perfidy, their exteriors concealing an unreliable correspondence to an essentially corrupt centre. However the play is constructed so that these misogynist interpretations are blatantly a double standard; in the world of Neostoic and Machiavellian politics, the new virtue of male constancy (which licensed dissembling and the self-interested manipulation of others) is itself structurally parallel to the posited ontological female inconstancy. Moreover, the natural-philosophical result of this investigation – the undermining of theories of lunar influence – renders the metaphorical argument driving it inert. If women's bodies are no longer easily identifiable with lunar ones, what are they? If their feelings are no longer the product of lunar influence, then how are they to be explained? The result is a burgeoning gap between ontology and human behaviour, a shift in emphasis from what we would call natural science to moral philosophy or ethics.

In one important sense the play thus seems to reinforce Charles Taylor's recent argument for the importance of Neostoicism in 17th-century processes of secularization (*A Secular Age*). Taylor singles out Neostoicism partly for its philosophical understanding of human beings as "buffered selves," agents free from the determination of impinging external forces. Taylor is careful to distinguish the Neostoic contribution – and indeed his concept of "buffered selves" which has to do with ethical self-understanding – from earlier descriptions of physical disenchantment more concerned with physical reality, the expulsion of spiritual forces (astrology, magic, and the like) from the ontology of the

universe. So the ontological disenchantment of the lunar observations, in particular their undermining of lunar influence – the most obvious of astrological phenomena – and the compensatory presence in the play of Neostoic philosophical arguments would seem to be very much of a piece with Taylor's story of 17th-century secularization.

But as my chapter will go on to argue, the play presents a number of important objections to Neostoicism and other forms of ethical disenchantment. These have to do with inconstancy's relationship to madness and feeling. My opening examples are both borderline cases of corresponding diseases distinguished symptomatically mainly by gender: Julia's lovesickness is a type of hysteria, Ferdinand's lycanthropy a form of melancholy. Inconstancies of both kinds are represented as forms of madness or emotional incontinence. But the play also marks the suppression of feeling as madness. The natural-philosophical argument just discussed, that the theory of lunar influence underlying female inconstancy was undermined, is not dramatized directly; instead, the play stunningly dramatizes Ferdinand and Bosola's ability to newly perceive the Duchess's (supposedly) dead body not as a corrupt womb or moon but as a human being meriting ethical obligation. In doing so Ferdinand and Bosola come to see the suppression of this moral obligation, whether that obligation is understood as an affective or theological given, as itself a form of madness, a melancholy derangement of the senses and feelings. In other words, Ferdinand and Bosola undergo conversions after which they come to see (as the audience has already seen) their Neostoicism as a form of madness.¹²⁴ Unfortunately the epistemic problems of the new ontology mean that in a real sense there is no awakening from this madness; the best we can hope for is a transition from one form of delusion to another. The 17th-century transformation in the understanding of hysteria, in particular the emergence of a diagnosis of female melancholy (Neely, Dixon), are related to this universalization of melancholy. Nevertheless, I will show that the two main women in the play, the Duchess and Julia, are more successful than the men in tolerating their feelings and recognizing their

¹²⁴ Gowland's study of Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* argues that Burton similarly viewed Neostoicism as a kind of political madness or melancholy (205-244).

feelings' potential to motivate virtue, achieving moral victories over men precisely in their adoption of mitigated forms of Neostoicism and what might be called Neoepicureanism respectively which leave room for morally salutary feelings.

One crucial domain in which the play stresses the salutary role of affect is in religion. Alone among the many who meet their deaths in the play, the Duchess and (less successfully) Julia manage in their deaths to accommodate their complicated existences to forms of faith; the men who die in the play express instead only uncertainty or indifference about their soteriological fates. While in a general sense this argument leans to the Augustinian side of William Bouwsma's influential characterization of the tension between Stoicizing and Augustinian tendencies in Renaissance humanism,¹²⁵ I will argue that the play presents its preferred interface of religion and affect in the language of Protestant critiques of Catholic superstition. All of the obvious Protestant polemical subjects come up: idolatry, indulgences, martyrdom, and penitence. This suggests that for Webster, Protestantism already provides the theological resources needed to cope with the religious and affective consequences of lunar disenchantment, and partly explains his choice of a story set on the brink of the Reformation. However that the women's reconciliations occur only at the moment of death presents a problem which the play cannot ultimately resolve. Religious affect in the play, if not strictly confined to moments of death and martyrdom, extends only marginally to certain isolated, private, and unverifiable experiences. It offers very little guidance for life in the melancholy shade of the Machiavellian world, as Bosola's accidental killing of Antonio in the dark would seem to argue above all.

Therefore my chapter will conclude with a survey of the many aporias of the disenchanted world that the play does not resolve. What is friendship, and what is love? Even to ask the question this way puts the two on a continuum, not a neutral decision for political-theological thought. Are both the product of essential attractions or sympathies, whether discoverable or occult? Or are they the product of some calculation of common

¹²⁵ See also Strier, "Against the Rule of Reason."

interests, however obscure and dissembled? I will show how the play explores the shortcomings of either answer. What is providence's relationship to free will, and is moral agency possible? Again, the play illustrates the impossibility of answering the question regardless of assumed ontology. Some of these questions are of course not the simple result of Galileo's lunar observations; for example, the explicit politics of the play follow, up to a point, the Tacitean "new humanism" described by Richard Tuck. But if anything Galileo's lunar observations amplify the urgency of answering the question of what grounds politics in the post-Machiavellian world. At the end of the chapter I will suggest some ways in which the play's analysis of love, friendship, and political agency exceeds the capacity of humanisms, new or old.

To conclude this introduction with a brief glance backward: stating the obvious, *The Duchess of Malfi* is a very different play than *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, but their differences are not merely generic. This introduction has enumerated a number of differences between the plays' theological cosmologies. Lunar influence in *Midsummer* is unpredictable but still crucial to the play's understanding of the untimeliness of fertility, imbricating nature and grace; in *The Duchess* lunar influence is perhaps done away with. In *Midsummer* love and vision are complexly aligned; in *The Duchess* they are independent. In *Midsummer* marriage has a sacramental residue and friendship can be read as edification; in *The Duchess*, both are secularized, stripped of their ontological basis and arranged on a humanist continuum. In *Midsummer* feelings can be produced by random fairy whims causing impulsive action; in *The Duchess* feeling demands scrutiny and may reveal deep but barely acknowledgeable or operationalizable religious and moral truths.

Glancing forward again, I will finish the chapter by contrasting *The Duchess*'s grounds for political optimism with its grounds for pessimism, and in doing so will sketch general grounds for comparison between it and *The Tempest*. To foreshadow briefly, immediate grounds of comparison are the plays' very different set-piece speeches presenting the world as new or transient, socially or imaginatively constructed or preformed and decaying. The Duchess insists that in marrying she has "not gone about, in this, to create / Any new world, or custom" (3.2.11-12), and Antonio in the echo scene opines to Delio

that as the ruined abbey no longer shelters the bones of donors who expected it to last “till doomsday,” “all things have their end: / Churches and cities, which have diseases like to men / Must have like death that we have” (5.3.17-19). Both Antonio and the Duchess appear mature, world-weary, the experience of divorce and (proleptically) Reformation under their belts. Antonio’s metaphor of disease essentializes or ontologizes the social pessimistically. But Prospero’s famous revels speech, though it contains a similar description of institutional, human, and apocalyptic transience, presents transience as the key to imaginative freedom or transcendence; Miranda’s at face-value naive remark that the Neapolitan nobles are a sign of a “brave new world” is similarly opposed to *The Duchess* in tone. More is at stake in both plays than the discovery of new worlds in the Americas and the moon. Despite the differences, what seems to unite these two plays is the attempt to grapple with the relationship of scientific and intellectual change to historicity; does intellectual change create a new world or merely reveal the world that has always been there? Is change to be understood as a social construction (or even a human-divine collaboration) or as an asymptotic process of perpetual demystification of a pre-existing and already disappointing reality? The difference between constancy and change hinges, in each play in different ways, on such questions.

3 Surveying lunar women

In this section of the chapter I want to strengthen my claims about the significance of the lunar observations to the play by making two intertwined arguments. The first argument is simply that the first half of the play is structured around a misogynist investigation of women that uses the imagery and concepts of the lunar observations. Though nominally an investigation of the Duchess, changing from Bosola’s initial mission to inform on her erotic activities to his later attempts to discover her husband’s identity, the men’s general misogyny in the play tends to collapse all women into one, defining female inconstancy as an uncertain relationship between the face (an expressive surface of unpredictable authenticity) and an interior usually troped as the womb (an internally animated dual subject that threatens to overwhelm the self either mentally or physically in hysterical diseases, and presents a conduit of influence from the external world). This diagnosis of women slowly moves inward from surfaces to interiors, negotiating the relationship

between the knowledge of surfaces and substances in ways not only homologous to but often phrased in the language of the arguments over Galileo's observations. Like the arguments over the lunar observations, these investigations are often uncertain about their ontological grounding; but they assume a misogynist interpretation anyway, rendering inconstancy as a generalized form of hysteria. This part of the argument has some parallels with Mary Floyd-Wilson's recent description of the play's presentation of male "fantas[ies] in which a proto-scientific practice would make women's secrets transparent" (117) and the general tension between the masculine new science and traditionally threatening female knowledge, though I place less of a stress on the attempt to discover female secrets than on the blatant ontological agnosticism of the men given their misogynist prejudices blinding them to anything but corruption. The second argument is that the play's scene construction thematizes the men's misogyny as a transparent double standard given their existence in a political environment of deceit and intrigue demanding similar forms of inconstancy. Given this double standard, the men's misogyny is legible as a compensation for anxiety or guilt. This part of the argument has some resemblance to Frank Whigham's influential description of the relationship between "sexual and social mobility" in the play, particularly the way in which aristocratic class anxieties may be seen to produce male sexual paranoia. But my account stresses the particular structure of these paranoias, the ontologizing of ethical standards which are selectively applied by men to women only to be opportunistically ignored by themselves. By using the word "surveying" in this section's title I wish to emphasize the use of mathematical and optical techniques to investigate a remote subject matter, a process whose conclusions for all their pretense of objectivity are constructed by the surveyor's viewpoint and ontological assumptions, here an intractable misogyny overriding the different personalities and social positions of the male surveyors.

The first episode to highlight is Ferdinand's striking claim early in the play that he would "have a mathematical instrument made for [Julia's] face, that she might not laugh out of compass" (1.2.54-59). The remark comes near the end of an exchange that begins with Ferdinand's expressing his dissatisfaction with martial games and his desire to go to war himself, against the elderly courtier Castruchio's advice to use a deputy. Ferdinand

objects with a question, “why should he not as well sleep, or eat, by a deputy? This might take idle, offensive, and base office from him, whereas the other deprives him of honour” (1.2.19-21). His mind seems to wander from there to other “base” matters, joking that Castruchio’s unfaithful wife Julia would through her “wit” and “persuasions” make all the gallants in the city “put up” their weapons (1.2.34). Ferdinand’s joke at Castruchio’s expense proposes Castruchio’s own inadvertent use of sexual “deputies,” but has the simultaneous effect of amplifying Julia’s virile power over military men, a sensitive matter given Ferdinand’s own opening sense of martial insecurity. His courtiers soon exploit this weakness by joking that Ferdinand’s “Spanish jennet” “reels from the tilt often,” a double-entendre undermining both Ferdinand’s martial and virile prowess (36-41). Ferdinand responds by asserting his own virile power over his courtiers, claiming that they should be the touchwood to his fire, laughing only when he laughs, no matter how funny the joke. That is, Ferdinand supplements his absent martial power with emotional power, reifying laughter as a contagious but politically monopolizable substance compensating for Julia’s potentially out-of-control and contagious “wit” – which, by another double-entendre, refers to both her genitals and humour. But Castruchio misses the totalitarian point and tries to save face by claiming that Julia tends to withdraw to privacy save *her* face, that she cannot “endure to be in merry company: for she says too much laughing, and too much company, fills her too full of the wrinkle;” this prompts Ferdinand’s threat of the stricter mathematical form of discipline, directly addressing the female threat after having contained the threat of his male courtiers (42-60). This more abstract sense of control over a surface replaces the substantive and contaminative images of wit and fire, Ferdinand’s prior substitutes for direct martial participation, and definitively ends the exchange. In the process Ferdinand and Julia have exchanged positions, illustrating a gendered ethical double standard, moving between private delegating cloister and promiscuous or totalitarian ubiquity.

It is of course not clear exactly what mathematical instrument Ferdinand is imagining. One could imagine an elaborate surgical brace, or alternatively a measuring grid of the kind depicted in perspective painting manuals. But the face is already a surface displaced from an interior. In either case, then, Ferdinand settles on a form of control effected by

representation, the determination of either bodily behaviour (facial expressions) by the positing of mathematical constructs measuring them, or of internal states of fidelity by the restriction of external expressions of them. While the connotation of the “mathematical instrument” is not precisely the same as a Galilean telescope, they existed in the same conceptual realm of technological measurement and control; along with the general classification of optics and applied geometry under the rubric of practical mathematics,¹²⁶ early rumors of the new telescope often associated it with other geometric surveying devices (Reeves, *Galileo’s Glassworks* 113). The gendered ontological paradox of Ferdinand’s solution is that it settles on the kind of delegation of activity or epistemic representation that he initially rejected for himself; reading Julia as the moon, he first gives her substantive ontological power (her wit) and then deprives her of it (she will not laugh out of compass), paradoxically asserting his own countervailing substantive force along the way (his humor as fire), then admitting its inadequacy (since in Julia’s case, it requires a mathematical instrument for mediation).

Women’s faces appear again in Bosola’s initial encounter with a minor character known as the “Old Lady.” This time, Bosola criticizes women’s own methods of control over their faces, insulting the Old Lady with a backhanded compliment:

To behold thee not painted inclines somewhat near a miracle. These, in thy face here, were deep ruts and foul sloughs the last progress. There was a lady in France that, having had the smallpox, flayed the skin off her face, to make it more level; and whereas before she looked like a nutmeg-grater, after she resembled an abortive hedgehog (2.1.25-31).

Here he describes her face in terms that recall both the mountainous and cratered appearance of the moon in the *Sidereus Nuncius* and the illustrations in perspective manuals of spheres with geometric protrusions and indentations that the Samuel Edgerton has linked to Galileo’s sketches. When challenged by her, Bosola admits that this explanation is not “painting,” but the “careening of an old morphewed lady,” which in turn he calls a “rough cast phrase to your plaster” (29-30) implicitly extending the

¹²⁶ eg. in John Dee’s *Preface* to Billingsley’s translation of Euclid.

traditional analogy between speech and painting to that between speech and sculpture, asserting a male linguistic bluntness in representation to contrast female subtlety in language and face-making. But Bosola then suggests a very different explanation involving sympathetic magic, describing her “closet” as “a shop of witchcraft, to find in it the fat of serpents, spawn of snakes, Jews’ spittle, and their young children’s ordures, and all these for the face. I would sooner eat a dead pigeon, taken from the soles of the feet of one sick of the plague, than kiss one of you fasting” (31-36). Though Bosola oscillates between enchanted and mechanical causes of the Old Lady’s change, either approach will do to insult women. In either case Bosola insists on a material change – “scurvy face physic” (2.1.25) – rather than the painterly illusion of makeup or the credulity of a miracle. He merely has to come up with an appropriate physical (whether sympathetic or mechanical) explanation for the concealment of the ugliness he essentializes.

But Bosola’s overt hostility to the Old Lady for her cosmetic practice follows his advice to Castruchio on ways to be “taken for an eminent courtier” (2.1.1ff). Bosola acknowledges the adequacy of Castruchio’s face and clothing, but advises the adoption of certain manners of speaking, including occasional humming and nose-blowing, the misleading use of smiles and frowns when judging criminal cases, dietary practices to control temperament, and spreading false rumors of his death to discern his reputation in the popular response. Bosola gently mocks Castruchio, but his advice mixing affected manners, Galenism, and outright misdirection elicits none of the viciousness he spews at the Old Lady. The distinction promptly collapses when he tells Castruchio and the Old Lady to “couple” (2.1.64) and delivers a clichéd “meditation” of contempt for the body’s ugliness and decay hidden under the “rich tissue” of external coverings (2.1.47-64). No matter the external improvements the Old Lady obtains, she is indicted for trying. Castruchio is criticized with her for the “sin of [their] youth” (2.1.43), their imputed erotic involvement (which Bosola suggests is inappropriate for their age), but not for his ambitious political manipulation of his own appearance.

In this scene and the next, Bosola’s diagnosis of women via the Old Lady moves from outside to inside, but before it can do so, Bosola diagnoses the Duchess’s pregnancy by

feeding her unripe apricots. In another ironic turn, his acknowledgement of the “young springal cutting a caper in her belly” (2.1.155) contradicts his description to the elderly Castruchio and the Old Lady of the human body as mere food for parasites and disease. Moreover Bosola’s diagnosis begins with the observation of external signs, the “rich tissues” he has just dismissed as meaningless, though this time they include her entire body:

I observe our Duchess
Is sick a-days, she pukes, her stomach seethes,
The fins of her eyelids look most teeming blue,
She wanes i’t’h cheek, and waxes fat i’t’h flank;
And, contrary to our Italian fashion,
Wears a loose-bodied gown; there’s somewhat in’t. (2.1.66-71)

The Duchess publicly explains these symptoms by claiming that she “is troubled with the mother” (2.1.119) a shifting class of uterine ailments mimicking pregnancy, stemming from corrupting bodily humours due to lack of menstruation, lack of sexual activity, or a “wandering womb”; the “mother’s” association with lunar influence is suggested in this transitional passage from face to womb by the mix of facial “waning” and womb-level “waxing.” Bosola’s use of the apricots to diagnose pregnancy is not quite fully motivated; his confirmation in the next scene from the Old Lady (apparently midwife to the Duchess) that “there’s no question but her tetchiness and most vulturous eating of the apricocks, are apparent signs of breeding” (2.2.1-3) seems to have added very little evidence to the signs he has already observed. All Bosola learns of is her hunger for apricots, which as several critics have observed takes the early modern form “apricocks”, implying a sexual hunger congruent with the diagnosis (Duncan, Haslem). This diagnosis, however, stunningly misses the main effect of the apricots, the induction of the Duchess’ labor. The actual mechanism of the induction is confounded by the mixture of causal ontologies involved in the play (Haslem, Duncan): apricots act as a laxative, creating an excretory looseness symbolically or physiologically linked to birth; apricots act as a Galenic purgative of excess humours causing “the mother”; apricots may cause premature labour through sympathetic or symbolic magic, since their name means early ripening (*praecox*), and they tend to ripen early; or the Duchess may simply get sick because she finds Bosola’s claim that the gardener has ripened them in horse dung to be

nauseating. Like the doctor's confused treatment plan for Ferdinand, the apricots function as an overdetermined probe combining at least four contradictory explanations, so Bosola's diagnosis is not as precisely made as he would wish.

But as usual, the faulty diagnosis is driven by an overriding misogyny. The Old Lady confirms the diagnosis in abstract (while unbeknownst to him, rushing off to attend the birth), but Bosola can't resist what she calls "abusing women" (2.1.12) some more. He delivers a diagnosis of women this time focused on their wombs and again evocative of the lunar observations. First Bosola offers a parable: "There was a young waiting-woman, had a monstrous desire to see the glass-house ... and it was only to know what strange instrument it was, should swell up a glass to the fashion of a woman's belly" (2.2.5-10). A phallic glass-blowing tube is not quite Galileo's optic tube or the "fantastic glass" the Cardinal mentions less than 200 lines later, but given the contemporary conceptual confusion around the telescope Eileen Reeves (*Galileo's Glassworks*) has described, it is quite close. After defending himself as merely mentioning the frailties of *some* women, Bosola extends the figure by asking her "dids't thou never study the mathematics? ... To know the trick how to make a many lines meet in one centre" (20-24). Together these two images suggest a kind of epistemic triangulation exceeding the difference between visual inspection and direct manipulation. The centric points of linear perspective or focal plane of Keplerian lenses are here identified with sexual promiscuity, the many phallic "lines" or glass-blowing tubes meeting in the female "centre." Roy Eriksen observes that Bosola's "trick" is "a pornographic version of central perspective as it was conventionally used in paintings showing the enthroned Mary ... where the focal point is the womb of the Virgin" (177). Together then these moments of misogyny suggest a skeptical view of the claims of Galileo's detractors who insisted that the moon was surrounded by a transparent crystal sphere, like a bit of enamel encased in glass, creating the appearance of depth under a perfectly smooth surface, preserving the moon's purity using the tradition of glass symbolizing virgin purity and untainted Marian wombs (Reeves, *Painting* 144-6, Fissell 37). Bosola is also drawing on the gynecological trope that wombs were brittle as glass and had to be exercised to be made malleable (Dixon 106); virgins and widows were thus held to be particularly brittle

and susceptible to “the mother” cited by the Duchess. Like his attitude towards the Old Lady’s face-making, Bosola uses the language of perspective and glass technology to argue that the female sexual appetite can use any trick or novelty possible to justify and exercise its rapacity; at the same time, Bosola’s deployment of glass and mathematics in the context of the Duchess’s claims to suffer from “the mother” suggests that the compensatory theory of the crystalline moon is as transparently false as the cover story for pregnancy.

Mixed in with this argument Bosola suggests a slightly more specific female manipulation of fertility itself:

And some of you give entertainment for pure love: but more, for more precious reward. The lusty spring smells well: but dropping autumn tastes well. If we have the same golden showers, that rained in the time of Jupiter the Thunderer: you have the same Danaes still, to hold up their laps to receive them. (2.2.15-20)

In this context the figure of many lines meeting in the centre becomes a figure for strategic promiscuity, women’s seeking of financial reward for deviously bearing children, Bosola’s “dropping autumn,” who may be undesired by their male partners. Bosola concludes with advice to exploit fertility’s unpredictable timing, telling the Old Lady to “give your foster-daughters good counsel: tell them, that the devil takes delight to hang at a woman’s girdle, like a false rusty watch, that she cannot discern how the time passes” (2.2.24-27). The figure of a rusty watch at the girdle suggests menstrual irregularity, one purview of the midwife and a complicating feature of theories of lunar influence (cp. my chapter on *Midsummer*), which is in Bosola’s mind exploitable in this way for profit. The bearing of children of uncertain paternity is of course threatening to the patriarchy, since it may be used to demand financial support from men other than the fathers, or worse, to undermine the entire system of heredity, inheritance, and succession.¹²⁷

¹²⁷ Like Bosola’s skepticism regarding the “miracle” of the Old Lady’s face painting, his citation of Danae here in a Marian lunar context suggests a similar skepticism about the virgin birth.

And yet, the play again quite carefully juxtaposes this misogynist anxiety with an obviously gendered double-standard. Parallel to Bosola's generalized male anxiety of being caught carrying the bill for another man's child – of his "line" being crossed by another's in a woman's centre – is his much more acute fear of his "apricock" strategem being caught up in another servant or courtier's political or status intrigues; the agent of deception in this latter more threatening case is not a woman, but a man. This fear is related to the general tension between Antonio and Bosola, ostensibly servants in the same aristocratic household jockeying for favour, and tense exchanges between Antonio and Bosola frame this episode.¹²⁸ In these roles Antonio and Bosola compete nominally in relations of service, not of sex, with the Duchess again at the centre. Delio conflates the two forms of competition by advising Antonio to cover up the pregnancy by claiming that Bosola poisoned the apricots, but though Antonio only threatens Bosola with this accusation later (2.3), Bosola spontaneously fears a similar strategem when a servant runs onstage proclaiming "the foulest treason!" (2.2.33-35). Yet this fear is quickly defused and turned into uncomfortable comedy when the servants gossip that "there was taken even now / a Switzer in the Duchess' bedchamber ... with a pistol in his great cod-piece" (2.2.35-37). The gossip becomes a series of dirty jokes, and so this specific confirmation of Bosola's prior imputation of the Duchess' promiscuity elicits from him laughter rather than fear, even though it's clothed in the double-entendre language of political assassination (a "French plot" (2.2.43), etc). This is all to say that Bosola's changing responses to these juxtaposed scenarios walk a very fine line depending on the gender of the agents at work in triangles of sex and service; after he discovers the horoscope in the next scene, he loses his fear of other servants, and is prepared to endure temporary imprisonment for the supposed poisoning until Ferdinand can respond (2.3.67-69). But more than the practical consolation of his evidence and secret patron, his reconfirmed misogyny itself reassures him, as he concludes the scene with a particularly pointed example of his *sententiae*: "Though lust do masque in ne'er so strange disguise / She's oft found witty, but is never wise" (2.3.75-76).

¹²⁸ Their argument about ambition in 2.1.78-110, and the entirety of 2.3 (the horoscope scene).

Like Bosola, the Cardinal also reassures himself by assuming of his mistress Julia's inconstancy. As I discussed in the introduction, he gratuitously and sarcastically cites Galileo's "fantastic" discovery of a constant woman in the moon as the exception to the rule that "generally for women, / A man might strive to make glass malleable, / Ere he should make them fixed" (2.4.12-14). Though praising Julia for being a "witty false one" to her husband, he casts her sudden suspicion of his constancy as a projection of her own "giddy and wild turnings" (2.4.12). This is consistent with the patronizing and condescending tone he adopts, dismissing her tears as unconvincing:

Why do you weep?
Are tears your justification? The selfsame tears
Will fall into your husband's bosom, lady,
With a loud protestation that you love him
Above the world. (2.4.20-24)

The Cardinal requires no assurance of her love, since he assumes Julia to be incapable of sincerity. Her presumably impotent husband Castruchio is no threat, but he hardly seems worried about betrayal because he doesn't even expect fidelity: "Come, I'll love you wisely," he says, "that's jealousy, since I am very certain / You cannot me make cuckold" (2.4.24-26). But Julia reminds him that once he assumed a very different stance; when first wooing, he "told [her] of a piteous wound i'th' heart / And a sick liver ... And spake like one in physic" (2.4.37-39). When convenient in the past the Cardinal ontologized his own erotic desire into a pathological form of sincerity. And even now the Cardinal presents his own desires as constant, powerful, and overwhelming – "rest firm," he says, "for my affection to thee, / Lightning moves slow to't" (40-41) – even as he calls her own perceptions blind projections, and her tears inert shows.

But the Cardinal is much less complacent in the next scene when he learns of the Duchess' pregnancy. Though he reads it as confirmation of "unequal nature [that] place[s] women's hearts / So far upon the left side" (2.5.31-3), he is more affected than by the possibility of Julia's infidelity because he sees the Duchess as corrupting his own "royal blood" (22). Yet though the Cardinal fears a kind of physical corruption his emotions are, by comparison to Ferdinand, relatively unaffected. Ferdinand spends most of the scene in a rage, beginning from his claim to have "digg'd up a mandrake" (2.5.1)

that's driven him mad, carrying through his imagination of her "in the shameful act of sin"

Happily, with some strong thigh'd bargeman;
Or one o'th' wood-yard, that can quoit the sledge
Or toss the bar, or else some lovely squire
That carries coals up to her privy lodgings. (2.5.41-46)

The Cardinal's counsels of calm take hold at the end of the scene, and rather than these wild imaginings and parallel fantasies of violent revenge, Ferdinand vows instead "to sleep":

Till I know who leaps my sister, I'll not stir:
That known, I'll find scorpions to string my whips,
And fix her in a general eclipse (2.5.78-80)

The figure of sleep is a complex one given Antonio's prior claim that immoderate sleep is "an inward rust unto the soul" (1.1.78) analogical to melancholic inaction poisoning goodness. While I'll discuss the general epistemic problems of melancholy later, Ferdinand's sleep here functions as epistemic isolation, a suspension of investigation which risks indulgence in violent dreamlike fantasy with long-term consequences. Because of these consequences his claim that once the husband is known he will "fix her in a general eclipse" cannot be the sort of objective investigation free from confounding phenomena which an astronomer might pursue during a rare eclipse; Ferdinand's vivid imagination has already had its toxic effects – note the hostility of his phrase "leaps my sister" – regardless of the Duchess's lover's identity.

Indeed, when we first see Ferdinand after he learns Antonio's identity, he and the Cardinal discuss the Duchess's pilgrimage to Loretto in terms subtly evocative of lunar eclipse phenomena related to Galileo's observations. This episode and the subsequent scene in Loretto at the house of the Virgin Mary, the site of the Annunciation supposedly transported there by angels in the 13th century, are the twin centres of the play and the culmination of its misogynist investigation of women. The Annunciation connection makes this scene the capstone of the imagery of mysterious pregnancy and uterine symptoms preceding it. But I would also argue that no less significant is the lunar

iconography of the immaculate conception, the heavenly precursor of the earthly incarnation, depicted for centuries as the Virgin Mary crowned with stars, clothed in the sun, and standing on the moon, adopting the image of the unnamed woman from the book of Revelation to represent Mary's preservation from original sin.

The possibility of Marian redemption tied to the shrine is utterly refuted by the events of the play (to assume a Marian intervention would be participate in the misogynist virgin-whore dichotomizing the play resists), but the Cardinal and Ferdinand's discussion suggests that the reasons are not so simple:

Cardinal: Does she make religion her riding hood
 To keep her from the sun and tempest?
 Ferdinand: That.
 That damns her. Methinks her fault and beauty,
 Blended together, show like leprosy,
 The whiter, the fouler. I make it a question
 Whether her beggarly brats were ever christened. (3.3.58-64)

This particular image of beautiful corruption is, I suggest, a malicious post-Galilean disfiguration of the lunar iconography of the immaculate conception deriving from what Eileen Reeves has described as one of the most controversial of Galileo's claims, his assertion of the earthly origin of the ashen or secondary light, the moon's illumination in shadow (especially in an eclipse) by earthshine or reflection off the earth.¹²⁹ This controversy was expressed in the iconographical tradition partly through the treatment of the mutual shadow and illumination of the moon and the figure of Mary, and the iconographical and biblical tradition directly informed both Scheiner's and Aguilonius's discussion attempts to explain the secondary light in non-terrestrial terms. While Aguilonius used the figure of the church "whose spiritual side was luminous and whose carnal side was dark" to explain the secondary light as sunlight transmitted through the cloud-like moon, Scheiner instead preserved the language of the woman clothed in the sun in characterizing the secondary light as sunlight transmitted through a crystalline moon, especially stressing the solar halo visible around the moon during a lunar eclipse

¹²⁹ On this iconography's transformation generally, see Reeves (*Painting*) and Ostrow.

(Reeves *Painting* 197-203, Galilei and Scheiner 227-8). While Scheiner and Aguilonius indeed used religion as a “riding hood” to argue against the potentially corrupting earthly origin of the secondary light, the Cardinal suggests unavoidable worldly dangers and Ferdinand presumes the Duchess’s essential corruption. Together they figure her as a partly shadowed moon, the shadowed part of which emits an unsettling and mysterious white glow, the reflection of earthly corruption, and the unshadowed part marred by permanent disfigurements (cp. the Old Lady’s face). By denying her the miraculous purity of either Mary’s own conception or the Christian baptismal translation of the nativity, Ferdinand insists that, like the Galilean moon, both the Duchess and her children are irredeemably stained.

Despite their highly visual language, it is striking that the Duchess is not present in this scene to be visually examined; Ferdinand has in fact promised never to see her again, and takes this promise so far as to encounter her deliberately in darkness when she is captive, where he substitutes a corpse’s severed hand for his own, refusing even to touch her (in other words, he considers her to be even more contaminating than a corpse). When Ferdinand does next see the Duchess she is apparently dead, and as I will discuss later, his reaction is very different. It is also obviously problematic to adopt the moralizing viewpoint of the Cardinal and Ferdinand, that what her maid Cariola calls the Duchess’s “jesting with religion” (3.2.316) “damns her”; a Protestant audience might be more sympathetic to the Duchess’s dismissal of Cariola as a “superstitious fool” (3.2.317). Rather, as usual, the Cardinal and Ferdinand see what they want to see, and their accusations of irreligion or hypocrisy are themselves richly hypocritical. In the Cardinal’s case this claim needs no special arguing, though the skeptical tenor of his language, presenting religion as a feeble shield against the natural inconstancy of sun and weather reveals a fairly irreligious attitude. Ferdinand conversely implies a negligence in the use of religious virtue transmitted ritually or materially via baptism, while assuming that the pilgrimage itself can have no salutary effect. As for Ferdinand himself, his earlier threat to string his whips with scorpions echoes Rehoboam’s claim of divinely-authorized tyranny (1 Kings 12:11, 14) and resonates with the joke he attributes to Julia in 1.1 which mentions the children of Israel lying in tents (1 Kings 12:16), a phrase that

marks the schism between Judah and Israel, the consequence of Rehoboam's threat. This presumption to be God's scourge in his punishment of his sister, regardless of the consequences, is Ferdinand's own riding-hood. The more general subservience of the Church to political concerns is stressed in the subsequent scene at Loretto, in which the Cardinal at the Emperor's request exchanges his robes for armor with great ceremony and two pilgrims privately discuss Ferdinand's manipulation of the Pope into seizing the Duchess's land, and the banishment of the Duchess by the state of Ancona which possesses the shrine. The Duchess's tactical use of the pilgrimage is by any comparison a trifle.

4 From hysterical bodies to universal melancholy: degendering madness

In these examples, men struggle to suppress their own senses of emotional or physical vulnerability by attacking women. Their attacks are broadly classifiable as accusations of hysterical disease, but their ontological flexibility and the variety of symptoms classified as "inconstancy," ranging from tactical infidelity to nymphomania, from menstrual irregularity to wandering wombs, suggests that a purely physiological conception of hysteria does not capture the play's concerns. And what would we then make of the gendered double-standard I've described? As at least one other critic has argued, the formal counterpart to female hysteria in the play is male melancholy.¹³⁰ But in the dynamic terms of 17th-century medical theory, this resemblance was not merely formal, given the new diagnosis of female melancholy, which acknowledged the similarities between hysteria's psychological symptoms and the traditionally male melancholy. Laurinda S. Dixon has argued that this traditional gendering informed 17th-century debates about women's education by denying them the trendy male status of

¹³⁰ Kaara L. Peterson has argued that Ferdinand's lycanthropy structurally balances the Duchess's "mother," characterizing Ferdinand's illness as product of a repressed sexuality and accepting the doctor's explanation of it as "plethoric, not psychological" ("Shakesperean Revivifications" 261). But by grounding both diseases in humoral theory and accepting the Duchess's claim at face value, Peterson I think misreads the play's ambiguity in treating both diseases. In her subsequent, *Popular Medicine, Hysterical Disease, and Social Controversy in Shakespeare's England*, Peterson slightly revises these claims; see 97-101, and 176-8 for acknowledgement that Ferdinand's diagnosis of the Duchess is not authoritative.

“melancholic genius” (197-207). Carol Thomas Neely has provided a more nuanced argument that female melancholy fused female mental disorders with disorders of the womb as a way of accommodating both (1) tensions between belief and skepticism about witchcraft (for example Scot’s debunking of witchcraft as melancholic delusion in his *Discovery of Witchcraft*) and (2) tensions between patriarchal denigration of female sexuality and new ideas of friendship and sexual equality in marriage (69-98).

While all these factors are present in Webster’s play (Bosola is accused of being a trendy melancholic poseur; witchcraft is repeatedly suggested and debunked; Antonio and the Duchess attempt friendship and sexual equality), Neely’s argument traces the augmentation by female examples of collections of case histories of melancholics, and her analysis of the symptoms there collected is for my purposes especially revealing. Neely summarizes André Du Laurens’s canon of melancholics in his *A discourse of the preservation of sight: of melancholicke diseases* (1597, tr. 1599) as follows:

All the cases but one involve male fantasies that encode anxieties about body configurations and boundaries, accompanied by grandiose notions of physical size (a man who believes his nose is huge) or responsibility (a man who thinks Atlas will pass on the world to him). The comic sufferers are terrified of bodily distortion or penetration: men imagine they are made of glass and will break, of earthenware and will dissolve, of butter and will melt, or that they have massively long noses, are crowing cocks, or have had their heads or arms taken away ... In the most extended and oft-repeated of them ... – of the man who thought he was dead and would not eat, and of the voluntary retentive who refused to piss for fear of drowning the world – we see the two contradictory poles of these fantasies: a grandiose sense of power and an accompanying death wish in which the fear of the breaching of bodily boundaries is defended against by an extreme mortification of the body (not eating or pissing). (77)

Du Laurens’s one female melancholic by contrast “imagining penetration, not fearing it ... thinks she has swallowed a snake” (78). Neely’s other cases of female melancholy are those of witches (who delusionally believe that they have great power), reported by Reginald Scot, and women who delusionally believe they are possessed, bewitched, or again have swallowed a serpent, reported by Edward Jorden (79-81). The latter two writers “relocate melancholy in the actual bodies of contemporary ... women instead of in the fantasized male bodies of the traditional case histories” (81), by ascribing female melancholy to retained menses or “suffocation of the mother.” Matching the shift in

specific cause, Neely observes that the cures move from purely theatrical and comic tricks in the case of the male patients, playing along with the deluded person in such a way that they come to see their delusion is false or believe they have been cured of the condition, to a mixture of trickery and physical therapy (such as purges or prescribed sexual activity) in the case of the female patients. To these cases from the medical literature Neely adds a literary example, the Jailer's Daughter from Shakespeare and Fletcher's *Two Noble Kinsmen* (1613), who seems to conflate all of the above symptoms, particularly in her fantasies of death, of "violent penetration and excessive reproduction" whose "images of an open, penetrable, metamorphic female body have more in common with the fantasy of the woman who imagines she has swallowed a serpent than with the rigidly bounded or terrifyingly fragile bodies of deluded male melancholics" (85); moreover she fantasizes about her existence in hell suffering bodily destruction along with the men who sexually prey on her.

I want to argue that when considered alongside Webster's play, these paired diseases become even more difficult to distinguish. In general terms the delusions of male melancholics, which express in Neely's terms, "anxieties about body configurations and boundaries," represent the material of the body as either inanimate or excessively potent. The range of hysterical symptoms seems to have a similar but inverse polarity, with the womb treated as an independently animated creature capable of causing overwhelming desire or, in the case of "suffocation of the mother," an unconscious state of near-inanimacy. Against the background of Taylor's story of the emergence of the buffered self, the symptoms (if not the explanations) of hysteria and melancholy seem to be a subterranean counter-tendency, slippages off the precarious balances the buffered self requires. Against the background of Galileo's lunar observations and the tensions between mechanical and sympathetic ontologies, they become anxieties about the corporeal implications of this binary choice. And judging by the range of its characters' opinions, the play is fundamentally undecided about its theory of either disease (the doctor's diagnosis of Ferdinand's lycanthropy is only the most obvious example); melancholy and hysteria are both at times faked by characters or treated as forgeable and able to be shrugged off at a whim.

Moreover, the play's most graphic imputations of female melancholy are some of the most transparent and aggressive moments of misogyny in the play. For example, Ferdinand's early warning to the Duchess not to remarry rhetorically forces on the Duchess the female melancholic's delusion of snake-swallowing:

FERDINAND: You are my sister,
 This was my father's poniard: do you see,
 I'd be loath to see't look rusty, 'cause 'twas his.
 I would have you to give o'er these chargeable revels;
 A visor and a mask are whispering-rooms
 That were nev'r built for goodness: fare ye well:
 And women like that part, which, like the lamprey,
 Hath nev'r a bone in't.
 DUCHESS: Fie sir!
 FERDINAND: Nay,
 I mean the tongue: variety of courtship;
 What cannot a neat knave with a smooth tale
 Make a woman believe? Farewell, lusty widow. (1.2.249-259)

Ferdinand's speech here is a particularly virulent form of psychic aggression in the rhetorical trap he sets up for the Duchess, forcing on her the phallic interpretation of the lamprey, illustrating the rhetorical susceptibility of women he argues for at the end of the passage (and again, there is an irresistible pun on tale/tail). The poniard is yet another figure for penetration, but sits half-way between a threat of violence and the confusing analogy that Ferdinand does not want the Duchess to become "rusty" from retained menses by sexual neglect, another cause of hysterical disease. Ferdinand's figures here thus ambiguously mix the desire to guarantee his sister's chastity with ambiguously feared and desired forms of bodily penetration typical of Neely's characterization of female melancholics. Earlier in the speech he warns her that if her face belies her heart, she will be a witch, giving the devil suck, evoking the other large category of female melancholics posited by Scot. The other moment typical of characterizations of female melancholics is Bosola's story to the Old Lady of the "young waiting-woman, [who] had a monstrous desire to see the glass-house ... only to know what strange instrument it was, should sell up a glass to the fashion of a woman's belly" (2.2.5-10); a few lines later he tells her to warn her "foster-daughters" (her clients as midwife) that "the devil takes delight to hang at a woman's girdle, like a false rusty watch, that she cannot discern how

the time passes” (2.224-7). Here Bosola transfers the common male melancholic delusion of having a glass body to women, and mixes up the demonic and somatic causes for irregular menstruation, considered by Jorden. Ferdinand and Bosola’s aggression thus specifically counters the sympathy for female melancholics Neely observes in her sources, particularly in their rhetorical accusations of witchcraft, the denial of which partly motivated the medical writers’ invention of the category. On the other hand, the Duchess and Julia both claim for themselves a certain excess of power as women, the Duchess in her wedding scene and Julia in her parody of it as she woos Bosola. In other words there seem to be no unambiguous female melancholics in the play, unless one conflates the male projection of compulsive sexual passivity and the female assertion of great power.

But beyond these anxieties about the body lie the epistemic implications of melancholy itself, particularly given the misogynist certainty that allows men in the play to claim to visually diagnose women’s hysteria. Widely seen as a disease of excess black bile mainly affecting the imagination or fantasy, in faculty psychology models melancholy intervened between the senses and the other components of the mind. Melancholics were characterized as suffering from sensory delusions or obsessions with non-existent images or particular objects, though with the general preservation of their rational faculties. If melancholy was perceived by many as almost universal in the late 16th and early 17th-centuries (Gowland 1-4, Introduction *passim*), Stuart Clark has interpreted melancholy’s “appeal ... as symptomatic of much broader contemporary concerns about the rationality of seeing” (*Vanities* 52). Melancholy was for this reason often linked to the revival of Pyrrhonian scepticism (56); as Neely and Clark both observe, Descartes in his *Meditations* considered both melancholy and dreaming before settling on demonic interference as his paradigmatic example of a disconnection between inner and outer senses (56-8, Neely 18-19). As a visual disorder, melancholy could be both aggravated and treated by the sight of certain objects whose images then entered the sufferer’s disordered imaginations (Clark, *Vanities* 66-7). The sensory aspects of melancholy constructed an epistemic duality similar to the melancholic or hysteric body, an excess

porosity of the subject through visual susceptibility, paired with an excess buffering of the subject through sensory imperviousness (in the case of delusions) to external reality.

While the symptoms of melancholic delusions survived the transition between humoral and mechanistic views of the human body, I would suggest that in the play the mechanization of vision gives these delusions a very new significance. In the new theory of vision, internal percepts are related only indirectly to external objects; before the Mersenne group's solution,¹³¹ this was an extremely unsettling idea. The odd mental power of images to induce, prolong, or cure melancholy could also no longer be analyzed in terms of *species* theory (Gowland 87ff.) Therefore, while I have already argued that in the play's conceptual setting, the physical implications of the lunar observations transformed every body into the reified delusion of the melancholic or hysterical body, the epistemic implications in turn transformed every perceiver into a delusional melancholic whose perceptions were indistinguishable from the projections of his or her emotionally distorted imagination.

When the disease categories of hysteria and melancholy are considered together with the lunar observations and the new visual theory, I would therefore suggest that what emerges is a series of more general questions about the nature and limits of embodiment itself, such as the relationships between reason and passion, and between the senses and knowledge. Systemic solutions to these problems, if they exist, given the play's ontological uncertainty about disease are not to be found in medicine. Instead the play's characters offer a variety of philosophical responses. The most obvious example is the Cardinal's consistent but shallowly Machiavellian (i.e. amoral) version of the Neostoic dismissal of the passions, including melancholy, as easily controllable by instrumental reason. But the play presents a much broader apparatus of male moral rationalizations and emotional falsification under the rubric of constancy, the male counterpart of the female inconstancy its characters so often indict. Usually men's suppression of feeling or giving it entirely free reign are both equally destructive.

¹³¹ i.e. the acceptance of vision as signs analogous to language whose epistemic ground was faith in the divine provision of the senses (Clark 329-354).

I will offer only a few examples here to illustrate the general pattern. Sometimes this takes the form of men's explicit suppression of their better moral instincts by some form of rationalization. Bosola's excuse-making is the great and constantly varying example of this and extends throughout the play. Bosola explains to the Cardinal that he cannot be honest because he carries himself with him wherever he goes, using the classical opposition between *honestum* or virtue and self-interest (1.1.40-44). When hired by Ferdinand to spy on the Duchess he cites the need to express gratitude for Ferdinand's payment and alternatively a material corruption growing out of the horsedung of his new position as horse provisor; both he acknowledges as euphemizing his desire for riches and ambition after Ferdinand leaves (1.1.210-212). After he learns the identity of Antonio, Bosola laments "this base quality / Of intelligencer" but promptly rationalizes his behaviour as nothing more than the fact that "every quality i'th' word / Prefers but gain, or commendation: / Now for this act, I am certain to be rais'd / And men that paint weeds, to the life, are prais'd" (3.2.325-329). Doing anything well, Bosola claims, is more important than doing good. While Bosola's rationalizations make him more of a complex character than the almost conscience-free Cardinal, Antonio also conspicuously apologizes for his accusation of Bosola for poisoning the apricots, admitting in an aside "the great are like the base; nay, they are the same, / When they seek shameful ways to avoid shame" (2.3.51-2). But he does so out of a sense of necessity.

Another form of male constancy is the assertion of an emotional imperviousness or inscrutability, usually a fairly transparently false one. The Cardinal's advice to Julia that she should not trust herself with the secrets of princes is of course the (ironically false) assertion that he can contain his secrets himself (5.3.255ff); but Ferdinand's similar assertion of inscrutability to Bosola, that "he that can compass me, and know my drifts, / May say he hath put a girdle 'bout the world / And sounded all her quick-sands" (3.1.84-86) is promptly debunked by Bosola, who in turn earns Ferdinand's delighted praise for offering criticism of authority rather than empty flattery. Ferdinand however promptly repeats his claims of impermeability when he confronts the Duchess in her closet, asserting his pitilessness now that her marriage has been confirmed: "thou hast tane that massy sheet of lead / That hid thy husband's bones, and folded it / About my heart"

(3.2.112-115). The Duchess's response, "mine bleeds for't," only further enrages Ferdinand rather than renewing his affection, belying his claims to be emotionally inert. Bosola engages in a similar set of futile emotional suppressions when he insists on appearing masked and disguised to the Duchess in the second half of play (at the end of 4.1); he claims to Ferdinand that appearing as himself is "forfeited by my intelligence" (4.1.133) – that is, required by his continuing role as spy – but his reluctance in the scene and pleading with Ferdinand to spare her imply that Bosola is engaged in some form of emotional self-preservation; he wants to save face we suspect for his own sake.

A third form of male constancy takes place when these other forms are unable to succeed; residual feelings are dismissed as melancholic delusions, either by the men themselves or their accomplices. Bosola sometimes does this, particularly after he stops using his melancholy as a disguise and switches sides, usually dismissing his misgivings or fears as the products of a genuine melancholy he often associates with sensory delusions. I'll treat Bosola's melancholy in more detail later, particularly its religious significance. A particularly extreme but similar example is the Cardinal's late-play reflection on his conscience in a rare moment of introspection while reading a theological work:

I am puzzl'd in a question about hell:
 He says, in hell there's one material fire,
 And yet it shall not burn all men alike.
 Lay him by. How tedious is a guilty conscience!
 When I look into the fishponds, in my garden,
 Methinks I see a thing arm'd with a rake
 That seems to strike at me. (5.5.1-7)

The Cardinal is ironically unable to connect his own experience – of sensory delusions produced by a guilty conscience – to the abstract intellectual question of the quality of suffering in Hell, though the obvious explanation is that the conscience or other forms of vulnerable interiority make every experience of suffering distinct. Implicitly dismissing the reflection in the fishpond, the Cardinal is then suddenly surprised by Bosola walking on stage to fulfill the role of avenger he imagines.

Even when considering suffering in hell, the Cardinal assumes an impregnable interiority; this assumption seems to be an intellectual error, even a form of madness, given his immediate confession of a troubled conscience while alive. Similarly, while suffering from lycanthropy, Ferdinand's ravings reveal a strange form of constancy, repeatedly invoking the particularly cynical and Machiavellian aspects of Neostoic political theory: because princes should be solitary, as an Eagle Ferdinand desires to "fly alone," throttling his shadow for following him; he plans to carry a bribe to hell because "good gifts evermore make way for the worst persons"; he studies the art of patience (a Neostoic virtue involving the suppression of painful feelings), by following snails to Moscow; he refuses to confess anything, preserving his secrets for himself; he attacks his physician as a mirror image of himself, both of whom "brook no contradictions" (an extreme form of constancy); he reduces his subordinates to corporeal desires to be instrumentally manipulated ("beasts for sacrifice ... tongue and belly, flattery and lechery") (5.2.28-80). Male constancy in these examples, whether compensatory for anxieties or not, is legible as itself a form of madness.

But while Ferdinand and the Cardinal are extreme examples given their social status and obvious guilt, the play also offers more banal examples of male anxieties marked as madness. The madmen who masque for the captive Duchess display the traditional melancholic oscillation between fantasies of great power and great bodily fragility. Their specific delusions evoke what I am arguing are the two main intellectual transitions the play considers – Galileo's observations and the Reformation – but these grand ideas are inextricably bound up with very mundane sexual and status anxieties.¹³² For example, the mad astrologer and the mad lawyer revise the play's earlier optical images into eschatological ones. The astrologer promises to "draw [Doomsday] nearer by a perspective, or make a glass, that shall set all the world on fire upon an instant" (4.2.74-76) and brags that if he "had [his] glass here, [he] would show a sight should make all the women here call me mad doctor" (4.2.99-100). The lawyer claims that "Hell is a mere glass-house, where the devils are continually blowing up women's souls on hollow irons,

¹³² The assignment of speaking parts to specific madmen varies among editions; I follow Brennan ed.

and the fire never goes out” (4.2.78-80). Like the misogynist use of Galilean imagery in the rest of the play, these claims to knowledge are claims to power over women, but through their delusional eschatology and obvious self-interestedness are destabilized. Similarly the mad secular priest and the mad doctor are driven by sexual desire and sexual jealousy, with explicit nods to both anti-Catholic propaganda and Puritan baiting. The priest will “lie with every woman in [his] parish the tenth night [and] tithe them over like haycocks” (81-2) and (as the mad usher observes) “while he shows the tombs, will have his hand in a wench’s placket” (103-4); however the priest has something in common with the puritan, insisting on the superiority of the “Helvetian translation” since “Greek has turned turk” (92), which Brennan’s note explains as a hostility to the English translations of the Bible subsequent to the Genevan. This territoriality over translation seems to be a professional anxiety like that of the jealous doctor, who asks “shall my pothecary outgo me, because I am a cuckold?” upon discovering that “he makes allum of his wife’s urine, and sells it to Puritans, that have sore throats with over-straining” (83-86). Though he calls “woe to the caroché that brought home my wife from the masque, at three o’clock in the morning; it had a large feather bed in it” (105-7), the Doctor’s concern is equally his professional status as his wife’s infidelity.

Yet unlike the other men’s relative indifference to ontology in their misogynist investigation of women, the madmen explicitly compete about the ontological grounding of their fields, or in other words their means of efficacy, material or otherwise. For example the farmer and lawyer argue about whether the law or a corrosive will “eat to the bone,” and the priest argues that “he who drinks only to satisfy nature is damned,” suggesting the necessity of sacramental grace in the eucharistic wine he consecrates. Though the scene begins with the astrologer’s and lawyer’s eschatological revisions of optical technology, it concludes with three descriptions of medical cures, tracing a gradient between witchcraft and natural magic:

Mad Farmer: I have pared the devil’s nails forty times, roasted them in raven’s eggs, and cur’d agues with them.

Mad Astrologer: Get my three hundred milch bats, to make possets to procure sleep.

Mad Doctor: All the college may throw their caps at me, I have made a soap-boiler costive: it was my masterpiece. (4.2.108-112)

The comedy of the first two cures is the disproportion of their ingredients to their effects, that of the last the (b)analinity of this “masterpiece.” As a microcosm of the play as a whole, the madmen masque treats the basic condition of male subjectivity in the play as riven by anxieties about sexuality, status, religion, and the ontological basis of claims in all these domains. When stripped of a female scapegoat and the political or philosophical mystifications of Neostoicism, all that remains in these examples is a ridiculous and pathetic madness.

5 Passionate philosophers: women’s moral feelings

There is of course one more male melancholic in the play, Antonio, who as the least morally culpable man in the play also happens to be the play’s one married man and the man who most explicitly acknowledges his feelings to women. Yet to do so Antonio needs the Duchess’s help. Therefore while describing Antonio’s changing attitude to melancholy and vision, I will begin a discussion of women’s attitudes to feeling in the play. While women partly adopt the philosophical rationalizations used by men – for example, Neostoic justifications of dissembling and self-interested eschewals of simplistic understandings of virtue, even the pursuit of sensuality – they are much more careful about acknowledging their own feelings. This allows them, within limits, to reject versions of Stoic or Epicurean arguments that are hostile to them.

It is worth here briefly distinguishing my approach from the influential work of Mary Beth Rose. While I have described one strand of misogynist argument in the play that essentializes women as inconstant, a counterargument, initially voiced by Antonio, idealizes the Duchess as a saint. Treating *The Duchess* as one example, Rose’s *An Expense of Spirit* argues that this dualistic view of women was being superseded by a Protestant heroics of marriage, which redeemed eros within marriage as part of a private life newly seen to be of comparable importance to public life, and demanding the heroic attributes of inner strength and endurance, and associated in the play with new merit-

based social mobility threatening the aristocracy (93-175).¹³³ My argument about the ontological grounds of the play's misogyny and its renewed attention to emotion suggests that Webster may be developing a particularly philosophical account of the transformations Rose describes mainly in social-historical terms. In particular I think Rose is too quick to accept Stoicism's role in informing the Duchess's heroism (*Expense* 169-70). As will also become clear when I describe her death, I strongly disagree with Rose's assessment that the Duchess by dying is reinscribed within "a dualistic discourse that idealizes (or degrades) women" (172). While I agree that, as Rose argues, the Duchess is placed "beyond the action" (172), I also think the Duchess's modelling of morally and especially spiritually beneficial feelings partly exonerates the play from Rose's charges of being "reactionary" (172) in its depiction of the failed heroics of marriage.¹³⁴

Antonio's initial description of the Duchess, which I will treat more fully later, is one that verges on idolatry. He describes her speech as "full of rapture," effecting a "penance" in her auditors and claims that her looks can make the palsied dance a galliard; along with these effects, he insists on her virtuous chastity, claiming that the "divine continence" in her looks "cuts off all lascivious, and vain hope" and that her "nights, nay more, her very sleeps / Are more in heaven than other ladies' shrifts." He presents her as a model for other women, advising "all sweet ladies" to "break their flatt'ring glasses / And dress themselves in her" and concluding that "she stains the time past: lights the time to come" (1.2.112-131). Antonio here takes the polar position of the misogynists on the virgin-whore dichotomy, idealizing her substance despite superficial

¹³³ For Rose's discussion of *The Duchess* see pp. 155-175. On dualistic views of the Duchess, see pp. 160-161.

¹³⁴ In a later development of this argument, *Gender and Heroism in Early Modern English Literature*, Rose argues that a feminized heroism of endurance emerges, for both men and women from of the interaction of the Protestant heroics of marriage with the state's emerging monopoly on violence and new mechanisms of social mobility. Yet heroism of any kind seems fatally flawed in the play, and women provide the only moments of light, however brief. The Duchess's adoption of Neostoicism may be more consistent with Julie Crawford's recent study of aristocratic women's dynastic political agency (*Mediatrix*).

resemblance to her brothers;¹³⁵ this substance enables the Duchess to create a miraculous sonic and visual economy around herself whose efficaciousness and transparency contrasts with his figure of other women's deceptive "flatt'ring glasses." Her very existence transforms reality in a positive way, making the past look stained in comparison. The Marian undertones of this speech are not particularly hard to see; Antonio's rhetoric suggests that the Duchess's substance holds the potential to forcefully redeem all women, indeed the world.

Of course, in its idealization of her, Antonio's argument is just as implausible as the misogynists'. The Duchess's marriage proposal must undercut this idealization. Near the end of her proposal she attempts to translate Antonio's sensory idolatry of her into a living affective economy through a self-inflicted disenchantment of her own body which is also a kind of iconoclasm:

Go, go brag
 You have left me heartless, mine is in your bosom,
 I hope 'twill multiply love there. You do tremble:
 Make not your heart so dead a piece of flesh
 To fear, more than to love me. Sir, be confident,
 What is't distracts you? This is flesh, and blood, sir,
 'Tis not the figure cut in alabaster
 Kneels at my husband's tomb. (1.2.364-71)

By insisting on her human substance, the Duchess demands a human reciprocation of her love, not the mortification of his heart; her use of the biblical trope of softening the heart provides an alternative religious register in which to conceive of that love, casting its denial as willful irreligion.

But if the end result is the perception of her fleshly body, the Duchess must begin by curing Antonio of other delusions, including the extreme dualism implicit in his opening evaluation of marriage "as those that deny purgatory / It locally contains or heaven, or hell / There's no third place in't" (312-14). Explaining his "affect" for marriage, Antonio

¹³⁵ The speech begins by admitting a family resemblance, but distinguishing their substances vaguely, calling them "three fair medals, / Cast in one figure, of so different temper." In contrast, the brothers constantly assert the contamination of their blood by the Duchess's actions.

describes a fantasy that he dismisses as the product of “my banishment feeding my melancholy,” even though the Duchess’s subsequent claim that his eye is bloodshot suggests its power to prompt tears:

Say a man never marry, nor have children,
 What takes that from him? only the bare name
 Of being a father, or the weak delight
 To see the little wanton ride a-cock-horse
 Upon a painted stick, or hear him chatter
 Like a taught starling (317-322)

Antonio’s dismissive phrasing can’t conceal fatherhood’s great appeal to him. Attempting to pierce his emotional blindness, she offers her wedding ring to “help [his] eyesight,” but this prompts Antonio’s even stronger denials; claiming to have been made “blind”, he figures her proposal as “a saucy and ambitious devil” dancing in the ring’s circle. His desire for marriage is incompatible with his fear of “ambition ... a great man’s madness” prodded by visitors to become “lunatic, beyond all cure.” Antonio’s figures are mere figures, and he explains his awareness of the dangers of marrying her (322-345). But his figuration of the intertwined madnesses of ordinary paternal feeling and great men’s ambition – whether demonic or lunatic – reflects the variety of social scales at which men use the language of madness and delusion to dismiss feelings they view as dangerous or inconvenient.

This is not to imply that the Duchess’s appeals to feeling here are, by contrast with Antonio, naive; on the contrary, they are extremely skillful. In the marriage scene she admits that she is adopting the tactics and justification of dissimulation Lipsius’s Neostoicism provided for princes. First, she overcomes Antonio’s idealistic understanding of virtue, stressing that he is worth her hand. In response to his claim that “Were there no heaven, nor hell / I should be honest: I have long serv’d virtue / And nev’r tane wages of her” (1.2.354-6), the Duchess insists that “Now she pays it.” Virtue does have an earthly reward, she explains, and her own violations of “simple virtue” and dissimulation are necessitated by her position, which forces her to equivocate like a tyrant in order to express her passions (1.2.356-364). In insisting on the validity of her desire as well as demanding Antonio’s reciprocation, the Duchess denies the desirability

of a pure Stoic *apatheia*; she is, after all, demanding the love of her husband-to-be. But this is not a simple indulgence in passion; addressing his fears of her brothers, she explains that “all discord, without this circumference, / Is only to be pitied, and not fear’d” (384-5). Referring to the domestic sphere of marriage, symbolized by her embrace, the Duchess posits an extended Stoic interiority that includes both herself and Antonio. Reinforcing this message, in the same scene he calls himself the sanctuary of her good name, and she calls his bosom the treasury of all her secrets. Cariola sums up the Duchess’s paradoxically gendered adoption of the tactics of princes in her closing remark that “whether the spirit of greatness, or of woman / Reign most in her, I know not, but it shows / A fearful madness: I owe her much of pity” (1.2.417-419). Though privy to the marriage, Cariola is not part of it, and excluded from its embrace cannot reconcile its moral and affective paradoxes except as madness.¹³⁶

The Duchess’s position thus incorporates aspects of Neostoicism, particularly in its reconciliation of dissimulation, virtue, and self-interest, but above all preserves a carefully demarcated arena for feeling. This attitude to feeling may help explain her ability to transcend the opening polarity between Antonio’s disinterested pursuit of virtue and Bosola’s eclipse of honesty under his self-interest, despite his clear sense of virtue in the abstract. Antonio only reluctantly learns self-interested dissimulation, and arguably does so to protect the Duchess. But partly because of her rich emotional life, Stoic tropes of consolation are hardly effective for her. When Stoicism is in service of extreme forms of misogynistic repression like Ferdinand and the Cardinal’s attacks on her sexuality, this is hardly surprising. But even apparently friendly versions fail. For example, early on in the play we get a hint of the futility of Stoic consolations for mitigating the pain of the Duchess’s first labour. Antonio worries to Delio that the Duchess is “expos’d / Unto the worst of torture, pain, and fear,” and Delio’s one-line response is to “speak to her all happy comfort” (2.2.59-61). In the next scene we hear the Duchess’s labour screams, suggesting the futility of this advice. A more complicated example comes when the

¹³⁶ As I will discuss in a later section, this figuration of a Stoic double self draws on the Renaissance discourse friendship. Cariola’s inability to comprehend it except as madness marks both her exclusion as a servant from the Duchess’s friendship and friendship’s conventional homonormativity.

Duchess and Antonio part for the last time after their banishment at Loretto. Antonio consoles her with a providential metaphor; heaven has parted them temporarily, like a watchmaker taking a watch apart to repair it, and advises her to make “patience a noble fortitude.” The Duchess objects that it is slavish to “account it praise to suffer tyranny” (3.5.74), but accepts the pain of heaven’s scourge; the religious element in his advice makes suffering palatable, at least temporarily. Yet her complaint that Antonio’s parting kiss seems cold marks the difference between an unfeeling Stoic patience and an emotional Christian one; Antonio’s coldness deeply unsettles her. Though he momentarily appeals to an Augustinian sense of human dependence on God in his assertion that “Heaven fashion’d us of nothing; and we strive / To bring ourselves to nothing” (79-80), he then excuses his cold kiss by claiming that his heart is turned to lead in order to sound his danger, using Stoic apathy to enable heroic (or risky) action. The Duchess refuses this strategic apathy.

Indeed, though the Duchess begins the play by forcing Antonio to accept his feelings, he is more often influenced by his friend Delio’s pat advice to suppress them. This difference qualifies a common thread, their suggestion that Antonio is suffering from visual delusions. For example, the Duchess corrects Antonio’s eyesight with her ring, and tells him to banish the devil of ambition he sees dancing in it, but she dismisses his fear in order to replace it with love. Delio on the other hand merely criticizes fear as productive of delusions.¹³⁷ For example, when Antonio sends Delio to Rome during the Duchess’s labour, worrying that “fear presents me /somewhat that looks like danger” (2.2.65-66), Delio calls this an effeminizing superstition:

Believe it,
 ’Tis but the shadow of your fear, no more:
 How superstitiously we mind our evils!
 The throwing down salt, or crossing of a hare;
 Bleeding at nose, the stumbling of a horse:
 Or singing of a cricket, are of power
 To daunt whole man in us. (2.2.66-72)

¹³⁷ Delio does however assert his friendship with Antonio. It is constantly influential, but lacks the extremities of Antonio’s love for the Duchess. I’ll discuss this friendship more later.

Antonio's sudden nosebleed in the following scene as he encounters Bosola while casting a nativity for his son dramatically tests this advice. As the play progresses, Delio's position manifests certain inconsistencies regarding visually-induced affective response, urging on Antonio a Neostoic constancy while hoping that others will be less affectively insulated. When Antonio decides to confront the Cardinal near the end of the play, he hopes that his own visual appearance will break through the Cardinal's hostility:

I may be that the sudden apprehension
Of danger (for I'll go in mine own shape)
When he shall see it fraught with love and duty
May draw the poison out of him, and work
A friendly reconciliation (5.2.67-71)

Delio does not object to this emotionally confusing argument, but instead vows to second Antonio. In the subsequent echo scene, Delio begins by trying to dissuade Antonio from his confrontation, urging Antonio to heed the echo's warnings, but when Antonio finally begins to change his mind after suddenly perceiving "a clear light [which] / presented me a face folded in sorrow" (5.4.42-43), Delio dismisses it as his "fancy; merely" (44). Acting on Antonio as Antonio hoped to act on the Cardinal, the Duchess's echo, warning of danger with love and duty, has done what Delio could not.¹³⁸ Ironically his dismissal of Antonio's feelings as superstition sabotages Delio's argument, and when Antonio reasserts his vow of confrontation, all Delio can do is reiterate Antonio's argument about the power of visual confrontation in heightened ontological terms:

Your own virtue save you.
I'll fetch your eldest son; and second you:
It may be that the sight of his own blood
Spread in so sweet a figure, may beget
The more compassion (5.2.49-53).

Stressing not only the power of Antonio's body to manifest love, but the consanguineous power of his son, the Cardinal's nephew, Delio in effect reimagines the emotional power

¹³⁸ Delio's plan to "second" Antonio is thus legible as a pun on the figure of echo; Delio plans to dissuade Antonio just as Antonio plans to dissuade the Cardinal.

of Antonio's fantasy of fatherhood that moved him in the wedding scene. But the target of feeling is here not Antonio, but rather the Cardinal. Antonio has imagined himself into immunity from dissuasion. Antonio concludes the scene by suppressing his own suffering, which he sees in Neostoic terms as the mark of nobility: "Though in our miseries Fortune hath a part / Yet, in our noble sufferings, she hath none: / Contempt of pain, that we may call our own" (5.4.54-7). By denying the affective power of his vision the scene implies the deficiency of Antonio's Neostoicism.¹³⁹

Delio's selective granting to Antonio and his son's bodies a near-ontological power to affect feeling in others while denying the relevance of their own feelings is typical; conveniently, his closing speech in the play will deny the dead bodies of the Cardinal and Ferdinand any material power, a subject I will return to later. But Delio's selectivity is also striking in his insensitive treatment of Julia, the play's other female lead. While Delio treats Julia callously as affectively insubstantial, Julia manages to assert herself in a morally redeeming way, retaining an unexpected constancy defined not through insensitivity but through sensuality. In the rest of this section I'll explore the power and limitation of Julia's affective strategies; whereas I categorized the Duchess as a mitigated Neostoic, Julia may be read as a mitigated Neoepicurean. It is Julia's subordinating of her initially redeeming sensuality to abstract calculations of interest and instrumental dissembling – in short, her attempts to behave exactly like the men who betray her – that precipitate her death.¹⁴⁰

As Christina Luckyj has argued, before Julia's first extended scene we are prepared for a character who is an unredeemed and self-serving adultress, but encounter a much more

¹³⁹ The exact significance of this private vision is complicated; if we read it as the Duchess's ghost – the echo is performed in her voice – Antonio can no longer participate in the affective relationship with his wife that was the source of their bond. If we read it as a more diffuse form of spiritual experience, the consequences are broader. I discuss this later.

¹⁴⁰ To my knowledge Christina Luckyj ("Great women of pleasure") first articulated a coherent case for respecting Julia's integrity. Though I agree with most of her analysis, whereas Luckyj finds Julia's boldness in her second appearance praiseworthy, I think the play demonstrates its recklessness and is uncomfortable with its ethics – though not, as earlier critics might have argued, for its sexual frankness. In using the language of Stoicism and Epicureanism to distinguish the Duchess and Julia I am attempting to make more precise the philosophical issues I see at stake in the play at large.

sympathetic and complex character. Julia's opening lines reveal her discomfort with deceit; explaining to the Cardinal that she told her husband she went to Rome to "visit an old anchorite / Here, for devotion," Julia's half-truth elicits both the Cardinal's admiration and his distrust. "Thou art a witty false one: / I mean to him" (2.4.4-6) he praises with a qualifying afterthought. This initial linguistic complexity prepares us for the complex negotiations of constancy which Julia will make in the remainder of the scene, and indeed in the rest of the play. When Julia senses the Cardinal's doubt she defends herself by turning the blame on him: "You have prevailed with me / Beyond my strongest thought: I would not now / Find you inconstant" (2.4.6-8). Presenting herself as manipulated reluctantly into a relationship with the Cardinal, she worries that he is having second thoughts. The Cardinal's rebuttal – that she is projecting her own inconstancy onto him, that women are forever inconstant, despite Galileo's recent claims – rather than comforting her prompts tears. The Cardinal's tone-deafness extends even to these, as he denies their significance:

Why do you weep?
 Are tears your justification? The selfsame tears
 Will fall into your husband's bosom lady,
 With a loud protestation that you love him
 Above the world. (2.4.20-24)

For the Cardinal, the potential unreliability of the tears as material manifestations of Julia's feelings are an excuse to dismiss them altogether in his calculation of what he thinks she *should* be feeling. With a rich series of figures he itemizes her debt to him. She should "thank" him for freeing her to indulge in her desires like a bird of prey released from a "melancholy perch." He characterizes her prior domestic state as that of a tame elephant merely watched, kissed, and fed, or someone learning to play the lute but until now unable to tune it. If her marriage to the presumably impotent Castruchio was one of sexless melancholy, her current state, despite tears, *should* be of "delight" (2.4.34).

Julia refuses this rationalist calculation of pleasures. Though the argument is cut short, she manages to object that "you told me of a piteous wound i'th' heart / And a sick liver, when you wooed me first, / And spake like one in physis" (2.4.38-40). Pathologizing

love through the language of love-sickness is a sensualizing manoeuvre antipathetic to the Cardinal's rationalization of pleasure and dismissal of her melancholy. But when Delio, a former suitor of Julia's, interrupts, he reveals a similar emotional tone-deafness by mocking her husband's horsemanship (Luckyj 273), and, not sensing her hostility, blatantly propositions her with gold to be his own mistress. As Luckyj observes, Julia rejects Delio's attempt to aestheticize gold by virtue of an appeal to more complex sensuality (273); his gold, she argues, cannot give her the sensual pleasures of a bird, lute-music, perfume, or medicine. While Luckyj phrases this as the contrast between "the crudely sexual" and "the delicately sensual" (273), I would frame it instead by contrast with the Cardinal's strategy; that is, Julia refuses Delio's attempt to convert her sensuality into a form of pecuniary self-interest. Whereas the Cardinal uses an instrumentalized, calculating form of sensual pleasure to deny her constancy, Julia instead uses sensual pleasure to reassert it, refusing an instrumental approach by adapting the very same images the Cardinal attempted to use to manipulate her. She closes the conversation by telling Delio sarcastically that she'll ask her husband for permission to be his mistress. Whereas Bosola, against his own sense of virtue, takes money from Ferdinand to become his murderer, Julia's feelings help her refuse to become Delio's whore.

But of course, just as Bosola was hired to be an intelligencer, Delio's purpose in approaching Julia is also to use her as a spy; he has after all been sent on a mission to Rome to help Antonio. Julia's second extended appearance revisits this intertwining of eros and espionage, exponentiating it. Acting out of apparently impulsive desire for Bosola, which she attributes to "love-powder" (5.2.153) overcoming the imperfections of his face, she accosts Bosola with a pistol. As many critics have noted, this scene parodies the Duchess's seduction of Antonio. Julia's justification for love is arbitrary and subjective, grounded not, like the Duchess, in a reasoned assessment of Antonio's merit, but in occult sympathy; as Julia explains, abandoning the love-powder hypothesis, "Compare thy form and my eyes together, / You'll find my love no such great miracle" (163-4). Like the ontological claims of the play's misogynists, Julia here essentializes her desire, and in doing so attempts outsized assertions of mastery similar to theirs.

Forcing Bosola against his demurals of being a “blunt soldier,” she demands that he court her using Petrarchan tropes but also insists that she is entirely responsible, denying his agency by calling him a diamond she has stolen.¹⁴¹ And she justifies this theft by explaining “we that are great women of pleasure, use to cut off / These uncertain wishes and unquiet longings / And in the instant join the sweet delight / And the pretty excuse together” (5.2.189-192).

But perversely this form of Epicurean self-assertion, removing the pain of desire by indulging it, in effect acting out the Cardinal’s description of her erotic liberation, ends up allowing Bosola to manipulate her instead. Indeed Julia demands this manipulation; conceiving of love as demanding material proof, she instructs him to “Bid me do somewhat for you presently / To express I love you” (195), unfortunately recalling in its attempt to render love concrete the Cardinal’s dismissal of her tears. Bosola seizes the opportunity to ask her to investigate the cause of the Cardinal’s melancholy. Again attempting to assert her control over him she uses Epicurean language against Bosola’s apparent Stoicism; claiming that she will support him and he has no need of further employment, she wonders “Not leave an / ungrateful general for the love a sweet lady? / You are like some, cannot sleep in feather-beds / But must have blocks for their pillows” (5.2.209-12). But she agrees to act as his intelligencer.

In doing so Julia adopts a purely instrumental attitude to love; she trades on claims of intimacy with the Cardinal to establish intimacy with Bosola. Her interrogation of the Cardinal recalls the figures of shared interiority the Duchess uses elsewhere, for example asking to be the Cardinal’s “secretary” and demanding he “remove this lead from off [his] bosom” (5.2.229-230), and distinguishing herself from “flatterers” or distorting “echoes” (240). The Cardinal resists, doubting her ability to contain his secrets, but Julia insists ironically that this is a chance to prove her “constancy” (253). Yet, rather than the private economy of the passions uniting Antonio and the Duchess, Julia presents to the Cardinal the mere common interest of a shared sin: “you have conceal’d for me as great a

¹⁴¹ cp. Rose’s contrast between the war-of-the-sexes language of Petrarchism and the Protestant heroics of marriage (*Expense* 119-123)

sin / As adultery” (250-251), she argues. And against the safe and warm embrace of the Duchess’ arms, the Cardinal demands the secrecy of “breasts hoop’d with adamant” (257).

Despite the cynicism of her investigations, when the Cardinal reveals his guilt in murdering the Duchess, Julia’s inability to contain her dismay comes off as somewhat redeeming. Julia slips back into the partly naive mode of her first scene with the Cardinal, unable to completely dissimulate even to save her life. The verbal double-entendre in her phrase the “old anchorite” and clarification that she visited “for devotion” begins to seem like a verbal clumsiness verging on miscommunication, like her apologies now:

Julia: You have undone yourself, sir.
 Cardinal: Why?
 Julia: It lies not in me to conceal it.
 Cardinal: No?
 Come, I will swear you to’t upon this book.
 Julia: Most religiously. (5.2.269-72)

What Julia means, she explains after he tells her he has poisoned her with the bible she kisses, is that Bosola was eavesdropping in the closet. That is, whereas the Cardinal nominally attempts to guarantee her secrecy with an oath, but is really trying to poison her, Julia’s oath is a more complex form of equivocation: the ambiguous referents of the exchange mean that she has literally only sworn that it is not up to her whether or not to conceal the secret.¹⁴² Julia and the Cardinal’s verbal miscommunications reflect in linguistic form the weaknesses of Epicurean models of sociability; temporary common interests cannot guarantee deeper understandings. The failures of Epicurean sociability are in turn dramatized by Julia’s betrayal of the Cardinal to Bosola and the Cardinal’s wish to abandon her because he’s bored with her (5.2.225-227), both instrumental betrayals when better opportunities arise.

¹⁴² cp. The Duchess’s citation of tyrants’ equivocation in her marriage scene (1.2.360).

But Julia's death scene is also interesting for other reasons. Her claim to swear "most religiously" on the Bible, along with her general surprise at the Cardinal's confession ("Oh Heaven! Sir, what have you done?" (266)), and her stunningly naive forgiveness of the Cardinal for "this equal piece of justice you have done" (278), casting her own murder as justice for her betrayal, culminate in her dying refusal of moral retrospection or eschatological anticipation. In response to Bosola's rhetorical question, "Oh foolish woman, / Couldst not thou have poison'd him?", Julia simply responds: "Tis weakness, / Too much to think what should have been done. I go, / I know not whither" (281-4). Against Bosola's demand that she be even more and murderously calculating, there is a disarming simplicity in Julia's dying comments, implying a rejection of the instrumentalizing calculation and sophistic rationalization of the play's other characters, a calculation she sees as a mark of weakness, not strength. In death Julia accepts uncritically a number of potentially incompatible moral truisms: murder and lying are wrong, betrayal requires justice, acts of justice are forgivable, and sorting this all out in any particular case is beyond human ken. In equivocating her oath and abandoning calculation, Julia's constancy to her husband in her first scene is replaced in some sense with a constancy to a higher power. Julia, unlike the Duchess, does not seem to have an afterlife in the play itself; but her characterization of herself to the Cardinal as the opposite of a flatterer or distorting echo and worthy his trust itself finds echo in the next scene, in which the Duchess's echoing voice ultimately fails to earn Antonio's trust. In this way the echo scene translates Julia's dying arguments and manipulations of intimacy into a consideration of the problem of religious feeling and its relationship with supernatural forms of justice. The Duchess's experience of captivity, torture, and murder are the obvious moments worth comparing to Julia's death, but they are as always embedded in a matrix of male counter-examples, and so I will next consider both as part of the play's general approach to religious feeling.¹⁴³

¹⁴³ For example, the Duchess's forgiveness of her murderers may be compared with Julia's forgiveness of the Cardinal.

6 Protestantism, religious melancholy, and affective anti-materialism

In order to understand the play's view of the theological problems raised by Julia's death and the Duchess's echo, I want to again consider the play's elaboration of melancholy as spanning emotional and visual disorders as well as being implicated in changing understandings of human embodiment and materiality more generally. Recent scholars have presented a variety of positions on the relationship between melancholy and religious experience which will be helpful for triangulating my argument.

For example, Carol Thomas Neely has argued that early modern theories of melancholy was "extended the boundaries of the secular subject and [shrunk] ... the domain of the spiritual or supernatural" (16-7), as she claims with respect to both Descartes's *Meditations* and Timothy Bright's earlier *Treatise of Melancholic*. But the concepts of embodiment underlying the two works are quite different; Bright's treatise is grounded in the humoral paradigm and Descartes's *Meditations* already includes a mechanical ontology and grounds itself in a new epistemic theory. The consequences for understanding the nature of the "secular subject" suggested by each writer are therefore quite different. As Neely explains, Bright's treatise "strives to distinguish between natural melancholy and spiritual doubt and advocate appropriate cures for each ... But in the course of Bright's struggle to fix a boundary between the incorruptible soul and the medicalized body, material explanations gain ground from theological ones, and the melancholy temperament becomes almost as universal as human fallenness" (15). By contrast, Stuart Clark observes the persistence of hallucinatory paradoxes in later (post-Cartesian) versions of melancholy, citing melancholy's frequent use as an argument against religious enthusiasm marked by supernatural visions, which were explained away as products of the imagination (64-6). Comparable to Bright's universalization of melancholy in the Cartesian paradigm is the transformation of the understanding of vision of the Mersenne group, treating internal percepts as only indirectly related to external objects, and to be treated as signs analogous to language (Clark, *Vanities* 329-354). This paradigm developed a kind of "mitigated scepticism" which assumed that the sense had not divinely created for the error and that natural knowledge was only of

appearances anyway (Clark, *Vanities* 347-8), permitting quite a different, even optimistic, stance on human fallenness; moreover the boundary between soul and body in Descartes could not be stronger.

If, however, we shift our attention from ontology to affect, the picture becomes slightly different. Rather than secularizing the subject, an affective analysis of melancholy becomes a way to preserve its religious significance. Angus Gowland's recent study of Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* observes that though, like Bright, Burton accepted the theoretical distinction between medical melancholy and religious despair, in practice he conflated the two (177); as Gowland suggests in his discussion of Burton's conflation of madness in general and melancholy in particular (124ff), this is conceivably a product of Burton's primary focus on moral philosophy, particularly Stoicism's, which sometimes emphasizes the primacy of affect over other forms of description or action. Gowland argues that Burton's Christian humanism was hostile to the Neostoic distinction between inner and outer morality (Gowland 224, 229), and that like Joseph Hall, he saw it as a sinful form of hypocrisy, indicating, rather than Lipsean constancy, religious inconstancy (259). Moreover Burton cited the Augustinian doctrine of balancing bad passions with good ones (271), arguing explicitly that Stoic *apatheia* was a form of madness, and lacked morally redemptive compassion (281ff). Gowland's reading of Burton evokes the affective moral qualifications to Neostoicism that I have argued that the Duchess and Julia embody in the play. Moreover, Gowland's reading of Burton's understanding of religious melancholy provides a useful classificatory scheme for understanding the transition from the moral evaluation of affect into a more strictly theological evaluation. Gowland describes Burton's classification of spiritual pathologies as fourfold. The first two categories adapted the Augustinian category of perverted love to describe superstition and idolatry as excessive love of a non-divine other, while describing puritans or schismatics who believed in private revelation as possessing an excessive love of self; the second two categories, atheism and despair, were analyzed as a deficient love of God (158ff). While the analyses of superstition and atheism were non-controversial, Gowland explains the other two categories as part of Burton's theological-political polemic and eventual adoption of a position similar to Laudianism; like many

other writers, he uses his categories to present Laudianism as a *via-media* between Geneva and Rome. In particular, despair was especially controversial given debates in the English church over predestination. While some Calvinists saw despair as part of the process of salvation, Gowland argues for Burton's desire, with the English anti-Calvinists, to avoid a psychologically harmful stress on predestination, including the despair it could induce (174ff).

I will argue in this section that the play uses categories similar to Burton's to explore the theological significance of melancholic affect, but want to argue that it does so in a way consistent with the gendered stress on affect and transforming understanding of vision and matter that I have argued are central to the rest of the play. As Burton's analytical categories suggest, theological analyses of melancholy are in the play aligned with Protestant critiques of Catholic materialism, but in the play these in turn are informed by the weakening of traditional theories of vision and occult influence. So the first step of the argument will be to show that what Protestants called idolatry is undermined in the play by an argument that vision should be understood as affectively rather than materially efficacious; I will do so by comparing Antonio and Bosola's attitudes towards the Duchess's body with her own attitude to her body and the wax figure of Antonio. The next step is to confront attempts to render theological (especially soteriological) matters calculable despite an acknowledgment of this new understanding of vision as a form of blindness. I will argue that Bosola and Ferdinand's transformations upon seeing the Duchess's dead body should be understood as conversions from one form of madness to another that attempt to calculate forms of justice and penance but again do so only by suppressing important forms of feeling. Finally I will consider the Duchess's experience of captivity as a more successful negotiation of the demands of religious feeling. The Duchess manages to preserve potentially salvific feeling by denying both Ferdinand's attempt to drive her to despair and Bosola's equally destructive attempts to impose Stoicizing consolations; simultaneously she constructs a selective form of anti-materialism which rejects the Catholic language of indulgences and the more general concept of retributory justice, but preserves an emotional and theological integrity even at the moment of death by refusing to reject her body or her attachments to her

family in the world. The general argument resulting from this is a particular form of Protestant affective anti-materialism, but its practical significance is limited by the paradox that while men in the play insist on redirecting their feelings into ultimately destructive action, the Duchess maintains her integrity but only by dying. Understanding this paradox will take up the remainder of the chapter.

I have already discussed the idolatrous suggestions of Antonio's first description of the Duchess, in which he praises the miraculous power of her looks and speech to effect penance, cure the paralyzed, and suppress inappropriate eros on the part of male onlookers (1.2.109-122). For Antonio these are manifestations of her substance or "temper," despite superficial resemblance to her brothers; he concludes his speech to Delio however by calling this description a "picture" (129). Somewhere between the representation implied by his word "picture" and the power of her body itself are the general effects she is said to have on her society. "Her days are practis'd in such noble virtue, / That sure her nights, nay more, her very sleeps, / Are more in heaven, than other ladies' shrifts" (123-125). Her essential virtue makes her a conduit to heaven, but his stress on her nocturnal inertness makes this a particularly gendered and sexually repressive vision. "Let all sweet ladies break their flatt'ring glasses, / And dress themselves in her" (126-7), Antonio begs, hoping that her exemplarity is imitable. He summarizes his argument by claiming that "she stains the time past: lights the time to come" (131). Antonio renders her saintly, even Marian, in her power to redeem the past from the material stain of sin. For men this operates through her speech and her looks conceived of as a materially efficacious form of communication; for women through an imitation verging on incarnation, "dressing" themselves in her image.

I have also already mentioned how the Duchess's puncturing of Antonio's illusions in the wedding scene operate by a form of auto-iconoclasm, drawing his attention to the very flesh and blood of her body and the eroticism it demands. But after claiming that "this is flesh and blood, sir / 'Tis not the figure cut in alabaster / Kneels at my husband's tomb," she explains further the visual and emotional complexity of that body:

Awake, awake man,
I do here put off all vain ceremony,

And only do appear to you, a young widow
 That claims you for her husband, and like a widow,
 I use but half a blush in't. (1.2.367-373)

Stripping away the concealments of ceremony for the simple appearance of “only” a young widow, the Duchess suggests a form of emotional self-exposure. But in acknowledging the concealing possibility of ceremony she vitiates Antonio’s prior identification of substance with appearance. Her figure of the blush iterates this complexity; a blush is conventionally a form of involuntary emotional self-exposure, but also an indication of shame. By describing her reluctance to “use” a blush, the Duchess casts blushing as itself a form of dissembling; she feels no need to conceal her desire even behind a conventional expression of internalized moral disapproval. The Duchess’s figures suggest an onion-skin sense of self, in which emotional nuance is available to indefinitely complicate the meaning of appearances even when they appear to be at their most bare and transparent.

So while destabilizing Antonio’s initial sense of the ontological force of her body, the Duchess’s speech also suggests a much more nuanced sense of the interplay of vision and emotion in coming to terms with that body. By its validation of erotic desire, this destabilization also undercuts Antonio’s initial and repressive moralizing worship of her virtue, a virtue he associated with that body. Earlier in the wedding scene, Antonio attempts to elevate this virtue to a moral principle independent of religious reward or punishment, claiming that “Were there nor heaven, nor hell, / I should be honest: I have long serv’d virtue, / And nev’r tane wages of her” (1.2.354-5). The Duchess ignores Antonio’s counterfactual denial of an eschatological instrumentalization of virtue by presenting herself as an immanent reward: “now she pays it,” (1.2.356) she simply responds. That is, she turns Antonio’s claim to the idealistic pursuit of virtue into a more basic principle of the separation between eschatological and worldly moral calculi, a necessary step in her validation of eroticism.

This is one reason why Bosola’s eulogy of the Duchess on learning that Antonio is her husband rings false. A much-debated passage in the play for its apparent sincerity despite Bosola’s ongoing betrayal of her, the speech, like Antonio’s opening praise of her, treats

the Duchess as a sort of saint, but one whose saintliness is manifested not in virtue itself, but in materially rewarding virtue. Scholars will pray for her and rejoice “that some preferment in the world can yet / Arise from merit”; undowried virgins will hope her “example / Will raise them to rich husband”; “Turks and Moors” will “turn Christians”; and

Last, the neglected poets of your time
In honour of this trophy of a man,
Rais'd by that curious engine, your white hand,
Shall thank you in your grave for't; and make that
More reverend than all the cabinets
Of living princes. (3.2.283-296)

Rather than discussing the Duchess's body, Bosola's speech works not through Antonio's praise of her speech and gaze, but through the metonymies and synecdoches of her “white hand” and grave, dismembering her into saintly relics which like “curious engines” are reputed for their practical, effective power.¹⁴⁴ Though the Duchess has, it is true, presented herself to Antonio as a kind of reward for virtue, the direction of Bosola's argument is contrary to her more general argument involving the auto-iconoclasm of the self and the severing of worldly form eschatological virtue; unlike her attempts to sever them, Bosola reinscribes materialist interest in the language of religious efficacy.

The Duchess's experience in captivity triangulates these ostensibly positive male reactions to her body in her response to the wax figure of Antonio's supposedly dead body. As usual, her response eschews the kind of ontologizing language men in the play are so susceptible to in favour of a more frank acknowledgement of the independent nature of her own feelings. I will return to the rest of her experience in captivity soon, but her immediate response to the wax figures sets the terms for what follows. Responding to the severed hand Ferdinand leaves with her, the Duchess's initial response is to question whether this is “witchcraft” (55). But when Bosola explains that the hand was taken from Antonio's dead body, which he then reveals along with the body of his

¹⁴⁴ Again there is a subtle skepticism implied in Bosola's allusion to Protestant revelations of the mechanical devices hidden behind supposedly miraculous relics.

son, the function of the hand becomes less an unspecified magical token than a trick to establish the authenticity of what are, unbeknownst to the Duchess, wax figures.¹⁴⁵ Indeed these images are not meant to function supernaturally, but to produce a paradoxical form of emotional discipline: Bosola presents them along with a Stoicizing consolation, “that now you know directly they are dead / Hereafter you may, wisely, cease to grieve / For that which cannot be recovered” (4.1.58-60). But though the Duchess refuses this consolation, she also refuses to ontologize the effects of the image, casting magic itself as a pathetic second fiddle to the power of her feelings:

There is not between heaven and earth one wish
 I stay for after this: it wastes me more,
 Than were't my picture, fashion'd out of wax,
 Stuck with a magical needle, and then buried
 In some foul dunghill: and yond's an excellent property
 For a tyrant, which I would account mercy,
 ...
 If they would bind me to that lifeless trunk
 And let me freeze to death. (4.1.61-69)

I will discuss her despair and its resolution later in this section, but the point is that the Duchess's description of the body as a cold “lifeless trunk” denies the body any material power corresponding to the warmth (often thought to be productive or indicative of magical virtue) of the dunghill. Structurally the scene is paired (see the appendix) with the Duchess's prior dismissal of Malatesta, raised by Ferdinand as a potential husband, as “a mere stick of sugar-candy, / You may look quite thorough him” (3.1.42-43). The fact that Antonio's body, a mere wax image, is capable of evoking despairing grief, by comparison points to the ultimate irrelevance of the substance of an image in assessing its emotional power; the apparent refusal of the Duchess to have the response Bosola demands of her in turn places the moral burden on the feeling subject's rich affective responsiveness.

In this sense in particular Antonio's dismissal of his private vision in the echo scene moves the question of the efficacy of images to extremes. A private vision without a

¹⁴⁵ cp. Bosola's earlier description of her hand as a “curious engine.”

present body in which it originates, Antonio nevertheless describes the vision as vivid and immediate:

I mark'd not one repetition of the Echo
But that: and on the sudden, a clear light
Presented me a face folded in sorrow. (5.4.42-44)

In naming the “clear light” and speaking of the image as “presented” rather than represented (a word used by Bosola in the next scene (5.5.82)), Antonio gives the vision a epistemic status uncomplicated by material mediation. Compared to the echo, which may be understood under Julia’s rubric as “imperfect” (5.2.41) – despite Delio’s claim that it is “the best echo that you ever heard; so hollow, and so dismal, and withall / So plain in the distinction of our words, / That many have suppos’d it is a spirit / That answers” (5.3.5-9) – the vision is even *more* unsettlingly distinct. Its suggestion of a Marian *pieta* offers a religious consolation that enables Antonio’s clear perception of the echo’s message. The message is, like Bosola’s attempted consolation of the Duchess through the wax images, the final echo that he shall “never see her more” (5.3.42). But despite Delio’s agreement with the rest of the echo’s message, he refuses Antonio’s reasoning and feeling here, dismissing the vision as “your fancy; merely” (44). Subsequent events – Antonio’s accidental murder in the dark by Bosola – suggest that Antonio’s acceptance of Delio’s advice to ignore his feelings is a terrible error. But even in this scene Antonio’s affective state suggests that his rejection of this private vision is a form of despair, the form of religious melancholy involving defective love, which, according to Burton, is the counterpart of Antonio’s earlier superstitious or excessively loving worship of the Duchess’s body. His Stoic conclusion to the scene, “though in our miseries Fortune hath a part / Yet in our noble sufferings, she hath none: / Contempt of pain, that we may call our own” (54-56) cannot suppress the recklessness of his preceding lines:

Come: I’ll be out of this ague;
For to live thus, is not indeed to live:
It is a mockery, and abuse of life.
I will not henceforth save myself by halves;
Lose all, or nothing. (46-8)

This recklessness marks the disordered feelings of despair, the unwillingness to continue living under duress. When he is accidentally killed by Bosola in the next scene, Bosola's attempted consolation before he expires is an attempt to "make thy heart break quickly" (5.4.56) by revealing that his wife and child are dead; indeed, Antonio dies with an entirely secular rejection of the pleasures of life as "only the good hours of an age: merely a preparative to rest, / To endure vexation" (5.4.66-8). This consolation is utterly different from that of a *pieta* or of Bosola's earlier attempt to reconcile the Duchess to her captivity.

Delio and Bosola then seem to encourage in Antonio a desperate, despairing recklessness by suppressing or cutting short his endurance of suffering, his feeling of genuine emotion or sadness for his wife's death or absence. While phrasing their interventions as sympathetic, the theological consequences are quite unequivocally negative. Antonio indeed complains of Delio's earlier skepticism in religious language, calling him "an heretic / To any safety I can shape myself" (5.1.13-14). Delio's sudden reversal at the end of the echo scene is, much more than the constantly critical echo itself, the kind of distorting echo Julia calls flattery when begging the Cardinal to recognize her as an intimate. To Antonio's reckless decision to confront the Cardinal, Delio responds:

Your own virtue save you.
 I'll fetch your eldest son; and second you:
 It may be that the sight of his own blood
 Spread in so sweet a figure, may beget
 The more compassion. (5.3.49-53)

Not only flattering him by praising Antonio's own "virtue," Delio's failure to retain his skepticism at this crucial moment is a failure of friendship, and also crucially again reverses the argument the Duchess has been making about affective response to an image being independent of the image's substance. In other words, Delio dismisses the private vision by ontologizing again. In epistemic terms and in affective terms, both understood as theological indicators, Antonio's response and Delio's are both failures.

When we consider the trajectories of the other male leads in the play, we also find a pattern of the failure of appropriate religious feeling marked as melancholic delusion. I

have already discussed the Cardinal's brief dismissal of his conscience alongside the problem of the material fires of hell. Ferdinand and Bosola are more complex examples that together develop an argument against the material achievability or calculability of justice and penance, furthering the anti-materialist argument beyond problems of religious visual experience. What Ferdinand and Bosola have in common is dramatic transformations after the Duchess's death that can only be described as conversions centred on her; they re-evaluate their entire moral identities by a reconsideration of their affective stance towards her. Though their conversions are partly prompted by the spectacle of her dead (or seemingly dead) body, both draw attention to the visual distortions produced by their feelings, effectively rendering the Duchess's body invisible. While arguably she (along with the play's other women) has up to this point in the play always been seen through the projection of male anxieties, in Ferdinand and Bosola's conversions her body for once acts, though temporarily, as a mirror prompting moral self-evaluation.

Ironically, Bosola produces Ferdinand's conversion by showing him the (presumed) dead body of the Duchess. While Bosola tells Ferdinand to "begin [his] pity" by looking at the children's corpses first and asking "how have these offended," it is only when Ferdinand agrees to "constantly" "fix [his] eyes" on the Duchess that he responds piteously (4.2.250-254). Though he describes his looking as an assertion of his Neostoic constancy, the vision proves overwhelming to his visual sense, prompting Ferdinand to exclaim, "cover her face. Mine eyes dazzle: she di'd young" (259). Rather than a visual experience the figure of dazzling signifies the overwhelming of the visual sense, a form of blindness or visual incapacity. Given Ferdinand's refusal for the past two acts to see the Duchess except in darkness, this sudden viewing metaphorically amplifies the Duchess' brightness but cannot be said to involve visual experience *per se*. Rather Ferdinand's first statement is one of reflection, drawing himself into the barest beginnings of emotional sympathy with his sister: "She and I were twins: / And should I die this instant, I had liv'd / Her time to a minute" (261-3). Timing is less important here than the combination of the surprising figure of material identity in twinship (a fact the audience has not been privy to until this moment) and Ferdinand's need, despite this

presumably overwhelming form of material kinship, to imagine himself in her position, facing the extreme and universal situation of death, before he can proceed to even investigate his guilt.

Ferdinand then asks to see her face again, but rather than describing her, his introspection produces a lucid confession acknowledging her murder as the product of simple greed and an inexplicable anger marked as madness:

I bad thee, when I was distracted of my wits,
Go kill my dearest friend, and thou hast done't.
For let me but examine well the cause;
What was the meanness of her match to me?
Only I must confess, I had a hope,
Had she continu'd widow, to have gain'd
An infinite mass of treasure by her death:
And that was the main cause; her marriage,
That drew a stream of gall quite through my heart (4.2.273-281)

But strikingly, rather than accepting his own guilt, Ferdinand uses his madness as an excuse to place the blame on Bosola, his spy and executioner. Rather than his own lack of pity, he blames Bosola's. "Why didst not thou pity her?" he asks, accusing Bosola for not hiding her away somewhere or defending her with his sword (4.2.267-2). Along with his galled heart, he partly acknowledges the irrationality of his anger at Bosola through a theatrical metaphor:

For thee, (as we observe in tragedies
That a good actor many times is curs'd
For playing a villain's part) I hate thee for't:
And, for my sake, thou hast done much ill, well. (282-285)

When Bosola demands pay, Ferdinand gives him only a pardon. But while abandoning his formal political threats, Ferdinand goes on to question the legitimacy of Bosola's obedience, citing the illegality of her death sentence authorized by no law or jury, the product of a tyrant which Bosola had a duty to disobey. With this his raving moves towards the demand for a higher court than his own: "Where shalt thou find this judgment register'd / Unless in hell? / See like a bloody fool / Th'hast forfeited thy life, and thou shalt die for't" (297-9). To Bosola's observation of the irrationality of one thief

hanging another, Ferdinand rebuts that the wolf will dig up the body and reveal the murder. He then falls deeper into his religious raving, “O horror! / That not the fear of him which binds the devils / Can prescribe man obedience” (308-10). Banishing Bosola, like the Duchess, from his sight, Ferdinand exits with an iterated obscurity: “I’ll go hunt the badger by owl-light: / ’Tis a deed of darkness” (328-9). The blind will hunt the blind in the dark.

Ferdinand’s argument with Bosola is fundamentally about the relationship between moral responsibility and delegated agency; Ferdinand uses madness to deny his own responsibility for the murder, but this moment of relative lucidity soon fades into the melancholy badger-hunting that becomes his lycanthropy. If Ferdinand has been portraying the Duchess as a corrupt moon, one symbolic way to understand his lycanthropy is via one conventional etiology of being moon-struck. This is a tempting interpretation, but a different specifically moral dimension seems to dominate Ferdinand’s reasoning. Bosola introduces the spectacle of the Duchess’s body with an appeal to a cosmic justice compared with which feelings of regret are somehow incommensurable or inadequate:

Do you not weep?
Other sins only speak; murder shrieks out:
The element of water moistens the earth,
But blood flies upwards, and bedews the heavens. (4.4.255-8)

In his own way, Bosola also grasps for a higher power to punish this exceptional sin, and does so by proposing a cosmic sympathy driving blood upward to demand divine vengeance, tears be damned. But he offers no means for that punishment, viewing feeling as an ineffective sideline. In contrast, Ferdinand’s feelings turn into that means; his madness will make him act the role of the wolf, here imagined as the agent of justice he was unable or unwilling to guarantee as a mad ruler. But if fear of God or the devil cannot guarantee obedience, in an important sense neither can his madness. Ferdinand’s feelings are beyond his control; they force him to act, but not in a way that fully acknowledges his feelings of guilt. Ferdinand’s madness seems to have a biblical model in Nebuchadnezzar’s (Daniel 4), a frequent model for discussions of lycanthropy; like the lycanthrope, Nebuchadnezzar believed himself to be an animal though he was not

actually metamorphosed.¹⁴⁶ Nebuchadnezzar's madness was read by the Geneva Bible as a warning of man's inability to obey God despite prophetic warnings to check his pride, and the need for spiritual aid in repentance.¹⁴⁷ Ferdinand's complaint that fear of God does not guarantee obedience suggests Nebuchadnezzar's punishment, and like him Ferdinand's madness deepens his isolation; instead of dwelling in fields, he disturbs graveyards, both extremely antisocial acts.

But unlike Nebuchadnezzar, Ferdinand does not receive divine to repent or recover from his madness. He does not even imagine penitence; his lycanthropy is a kind of split agency characteristic of Neostoic moral theory, but its terms are inside out. If, as Gowland has suggested, Burton reads the Neostoic assertion of external transgression and internal virtue as a form of madness, Ferdinand's curiously self-rationalizing lycanthropy inverts this conventional form; he exclaims that contrary to appearances he is "hairy on the inside" (5.2.18), and his desire to be pierced to prove it recalls the female melancholic fantasies of penetration.¹⁴⁸ Like his slanders of his sister, this fantasy of total corruption posits the impossibility of repentance. Moreover, his melancholic ravings reveal his anxieties about his ability as a rule, overexaggerating his solitary power, constancy, and prudence in a parody of Neostoicism. Explaining his solitariness as the royal behaviour of an eagle, he aggressively fights the shadow that won't leave him alone; he cynically observes that "when I go to hell, I mean to carry a bribe: for look you, good gifts evermore make way for the worst persons" (5.2.41-3); he practices patience by promising to drive snails to Moscow without a whip (46-51); and he observes that "physicians are like kings / they brook no contradiction" (65). These claims reduce Neostoic theories of rule to a grab-bag of pathetic and self-serving compensations; a better place in hell earned through bribery is a far cry from redemption. His final exclamation to the doctor that "there's nothing left of you, but tongue and belly, flattery and lechery" (78-80), when read along his initial attempt to place the blame for the

¹⁴⁶ cp. Hirsch 305-6; Shirilan 80.

¹⁴⁷ See its note to Daniel 4:26.

¹⁴⁸ According to the ring structure described in the appendix, Ferdinand's request to be penetrated by swords corresponds to Bosola's quip about the trick to make many lines meet in one centre.

murder on Bosola is an indirect statement of solitary responsibility; a king with deceitful and incontinent servants must become a cynical and isolated force of his own.

But, again, Ferdinand's madness prevents any coming to terms with his sin, rendering it legible as both the political melancholy of Neostoicism and the religious melancholy of despair, though Ferdinand cannot even express himself in these latter terms. Given his sense of his inevitable damnation, Ferdinand's patience is nothing like penitential patience. His refusal to whip his snails is strikingly different from his earlier claim to use scorpions to string his whips, acting like Rehoboam as a divine scourge of his sister; the first is in some ways a refusal to act, but to what end never becomes clear. Rather than considering his feelings, he Stoically suppresses them. And eventually he does act, but randomly, mortally wounding both his brother and Bosola while calling for a fresh horse (5.5.47), enacting a discredited fantasy of martial valour he had desired from the beginning of the play. As they lie dying, he offers them a garbled consolation he seems not to believe himself:

Now you're brave fellows. Caesar's fortune was harder than Pompey's: Caesar died in the arms of prosperity, Pompey at the feet of disgrace: you both died in the field, the pain's nothing. Pain many times is taken away with the apprehension of greater, as the toothache with the sight of a barber that come to pull it out: there's philosophy for you. (55-61)

This consolation's secular mixture of trite appeals to heroism and Stoic dismissal of pains gives way as Ferdinand's own mortal wound by Bosola elicits a moderately more religious consolation:

I do account this world but a dog-kennel:
I will vault credit, and affect high pleasures
Beyond death. (66-68)

No more convincing than his advice to Bosola and the Cardinal, this mixture of *contemptus mundi* and the ambitious language of deceitful affectation and vaulting credit casts this Christianized Neostoicism *in extremis* as another merely self-serving veneer. This is not a statement motivated by anything approximating a struggle of faith, but a transparent desire for elite "high pleasures." The closest Ferdinand comes to any sort of explicit recognition of his guilt is his final exclamation:

My sister, oh! My sister, there's the cause on't.
 Whether we fall by ambition, blood, or lust,
 Like diamonds we are cut with our own dust. (70-72)

This analysis of cause also obscures; neither sister nor self is unequivocally responsible, motives multiply, and cause and punishment are conflated in the one substance of the diamond. By ending on this elite substance whose hardness exemplifies his impossible ideal of constancy, the substance of material causation ultimately displaces moral accounting from Ferdinand's analysis.

Like Ferdinand's, Bosola's conversion is also legible as a brief moment of lucidity between bouts of madness; contemplating the Duchess's dead body, both describe their past behaviour as insane. Bosola is more lucid than Ferdinand in that he at least momentarily – especially during the Duchess's brief revival – acknowledges his feelings, and explicitly discusses his desire for penitence. But like Ferdinand, Bosola is uncertain how to turn his feelings into action, and while desperately seeking a course of action he often dismisses his misgivings as melancholy. Bosola's motives are, like Ferdinand's, particularly complex; he paradoxically demands both revenge and penitence, feeling himself both a sinner and one sinned against. This paradox of moral feeling is fundamentally unresolvable through action.

Though Ferdinand blames Bosola for not preventing the Duchess's murder, Bosola does of course several times *verbally* object. Most notably after the trick with the wax figures, when Bosola counsels the Duchess against despair, he begs Ferdinand to cease his "cruelty" and to "send her a penitential garment, to put on / Next to her delicate skin and furnish her / With beads and prayerbooks" (4.1.116-119). Ferdinand refuses this advice and insists on continuing his attempt to drive her mad, to foist the religious melancholy of despair upon her rather than the salutary sadness of penitence. It is fitting then that Bosola's conversion involves a desperate fixation on penitential feeling and an avoidance of any melancholic feeling that smacks of despair.

This movement towards penitence begins with a recognition of his own responsibility in the murder, which begins by framing his subordinating of virtue to service as madness. Ironically reversing his original explanation of his service to Ferdinand after being paid

as a compulsory show of gratitude (1.2.194) by calling Ferdinand's own failure to pay "ingratitude" (4.2.307), he suggests that this faith in service was delusional: "I stand like one / That long hath tan a sweet and golden dream. / I am angry with myself, now that I wake" (4.2.317-9). But in amplifying the stakes of what he views as Ferdinand's betrayal, Bosola also amplifies the moral stakes of his service; not only was he foolish to serve, but also evil:

Let me know
Wherefore I should be thus neglected? Sir,
I served your tyranny: and rather strove
To satisfy yourself, than all the world;
And though I loath'd the evil, yet I lov'd
You that did counsel it: and rather sought
To appear a true servant than an honest man. (4.2.321-327)

When Ferdinand leaves, Bosola's burgeoning conscience begins to outweigh his desire for material rewards:

While with vain hopes our faculties we tire,
We seem to sweat in ice and freeze in fire;
What would I do, were this to do again?
I would not change my peace of conscience
For all the wealth of Europe. (4.2.331-335)

Bosola's figure of his retrospective awareness of the sensory distortions produced by "vain hopes" of reward, the sweating in ice and freezing in fire, comes off as a moment of moral clarity, which is amplified by his brief hope of redemption, when the Duchess revives:

She stirs; here's life.
Return, fair soul, from darkness, and lead mine
Out of this sensible hell. She's warm, she breathes:
Upon thy pale lips I will melt my heart
To store them with fresh colour. Who's there?
Some cordial drink! Alas! I dare not call:
So pity would destroy pity: her eye opes,
And heaven in it seems to open, that late was shut,
To take me up to mercy. (4.2.331-343)

Bosola's hopes are here remarkably moving; he figures his own feelings, his heart, as being able to revive the Duchess, to miraculously colour and animate her nearly-dead body, in a striking reversal of Antonio's idolatry of her body early in the play. But there is something still idolatrous here in his attributing to her eyes the power to take him out of his melancholic despair, the "sensible hell" of his disturbed conscience. If she does not die, he has not murdered her; this consequentialist understanding of mercy is simply too easy, and the lie Bosola tells the Duchess on her revival suggests as much. She breathes Antonio's name, and he admits truthfully that Antonio still lives and the wax figures were fake, but lies that he's reconciled to her brothers through the Pope's "atonement" (347). The Duchess takes this half-truth as a "mercy," and dies, but Bosola's atonement will not be so easy as the fiction of the Pope's blessing.

Bosola concludes the scene with a desperate assertion of penitential feeling which however in seeking to avoid despair ties it to action. He begins by figuring innocence and guilt both as forms of insensibility, and laments as madness the failure to act morally:

Oh sacred innocence, that sweetly sleeps
 On turtles' feathers: whilst a guilty conscience
 Is a black register, wherein is writ
 All our good deeds and bad; a perspective
 That shows us hell; that we cannot be suffer'd
 To do good when we have a mind to it! (4.2.349-354).

If the conscience reveals only hell, its despairing blackness is a form of melancholy equivalent to the failure to do good when otherwise morally aware. Penance is the form of action required to transcend the religious melancholy of despair produced by a guilty conscience. And Bosola therefore emphasizes and defends his penitential feeling against masculinist Neostoic arguments against it:

This is manly sorrow:
 These tears, I am very certain, never grew
 In my mother's milk. My estate is sunk
 Below the degree of fear: where were
 These penitent fountains while she was living?
 Oh, they were frozen up: here is a sight
 As direful to my soul as is the sword
 Unto a wretch hath slain his father. (4.2.355-362)

Decrying his prior failure of emotion, like his prior failure of action, Bosola wonders if his penitence too late. The sight of the Duchess's dead body has an almost ontological power; here Bosola hints at superstitions about the power of murder weapons to elicit confessions, but he fears instead his soul's despair. Vowing to fulfill her last request by returning the Duchess's body to her women as she requested, Bosola concludes by vowing another unspecified action: "I'll post to Milan, / Where somewhat I will speedily enact / Worth my dejection" (4.2.367-9). Bosola's haste reveals his compulsion to act, though it is unclear even to him what kind of action could redeem him. It is clear though that for Bosola penitential feeling alone is insufficient.

The beginning of the next scene opens with Antonio and Delio considering the possibility of reconciliation with the Duchess's brothers, the very "atonement" Bosola invented to console the Duchess. But just like Antonio's desperate plan to confront the Cardinal, Bosola in this act can only improvise in his attempt to achieve a higher form of atonement. Confronting the Cardinal without an apparent plan, Bosola plays along with the Cardinal's pretense of ignorance regarding the Duchess's death and agrees to murder Antonio. Julia's intervention prompts another improvisation, but her death while acting as his spy elicits from Bosola more anger than regret; exclaiming "Oh foolish woman, / Couldst not thou have poison'd him?" (5.2.281-2), Bosola hardly gives her a second thought. With Bosola eavesdropping in a closet the scene subtly parodies the confessional, with the Cardinal confessing his complicity with Bosola's sins – atoning the two by admitting he is his "fellow murderer" – and promising Bosola "honour" rather than absolution if he persists with the murder plot; in a parody of spiritual counsel, the Cardinal dismisses Bosola's moral qualms by telling him to "throw to the devil / thy melancholy" (302-3). But Bosola's soliloquy closing the scene subtly reframes his melancholy again even as he seizes on Antonio's cause as his penitential means:

Oh poor Antonio, though nothing be so needful
To thy estate, as pity, yet I find
Nothing so dangerous. I must look to my footing:
In such slippery ice-pavements men had need
To be frost-nail'd well: they may break their necks else.
The president's here afore me: how this man
Bears up in blood! Seems fearless! Why, 'tis well:

Security some men call the suburbs of hell,
 Only a dead wall between. Well, good Antonio,
 I'll seek thee out; and all my care shall be
 To put thee into safety from the reach
 Of these most cruel biters, that have got
 Some of thy blood already. It may be,
 I'll join with thee in a most just revenge.
 The weakest arm is strong enough, that strikes
 With the sword of justice. Still methinks the Duchess
 Haunts me: there, there: 'tis nothing but my melancholy.
 O penitence, let me truly taste thy cup,
 That throws men down, only to raise them up. (5.2.326-343)

Bosola here carefully balances his feelings of pity and fear, aligning an interesting revision of Aristotelian catharsis with his desire for penitential purgation of guilt – or perhaps only of his guilty feelings. While “security” or spiritually damning confidence in his absolution is to be avoided, Bosola’s tentative qualification that he “may” join with Antonio in revenge may not be worth as much as he thinks. Bosola argues in effect that by making his cause Antonio’s, he will be acting in service of a higher form of justice, a providential sword that will guarantee the success of even his weak arms. As the speech ends, he seems to dismiss the doubts suggested by the figure of the Duchess haunting him as melancholy; his hope that penitence will raise him up revisits his figure of the Duchess’ white hand and the ambition that has dogged him the entire play. Bosola, despite his initial emotional subtlety, has by the end of the speech fallen into the same materialist traps again, operationalizing penitence to his own gain. And again, he does so by dismissing his doubts as mere melancholy. Like him, the less emotionally subtle Antonio will dismiss a direct vision of the Duchess in the echo scene that directly follows. What Antonio dismisses out of despair, Bosola dismisses out of a desperate desire for penitence. This is an interesting complication of the role of the conventional revenger; by displacing his revenge onto Antonio’s cause, Bosola casts sinful revenge itself as a form of penitence.

But when he kills Antonio accidentally in the dark, Bosola seems to abandon all hope of penitence and all belief in a providential justice acting in the world; we are the stars’ tennis balls, he laments, abandoning all to fate. When he dies in the next scene he speaks only of revenge – not for Antonio any more, but for himself. Killing Ferdinand he calls

his revenge perfect; moreover, when the Cardinal's nobles rush in to find the carnage, he responds to Roderigo's question, "how comes this?" with a reduction of all causation or explanation to the scheme of revenge:

Revenge, for the Duchess of Malfi, murdered
 By th' Aragonian brethren; for Antonio,
 Slain by this hand; for lustful Julia,
 Poisone'd by this man; and lastly, for myself,
 That was an actor in the main of all,
 Much 'gainst mine own good nature, yet i'th' end
 Neglected. (5.5.80-86)

Bosola's paradoxical analysis here again extends far beyond that of the conventional tragic revenger. Despite confessing his role as agent or "actor" in the three murders he cites, he also manages to portray himself as a victim, being forced to sin despite his "own good nature." This is about as far from true penitence as you can get. Yet there is perhaps an ambiguity in the last phrase. The passive voice obscures who or what is neglected: Is Bosola complaining again that the Aragonian brothers have failed to fulfill their bargain? Or is he admitting a form of moral negligence, having ignored his own "good nature," thereby admitting his culpability even as a mere actor?

The Cardinal dying offers no more enlightening a version of the events, explaining only that Ferdinand wounded himself and Bosola and tersely commanding, "I pray, let me / Be laid by, and never thought of" (88-9). The word "pray" ironically brings out the finality of this request, given the Catholic economy of prayers for the dead (a subject I'll discuss more with respect to the Duchess's imprisonment.) But Bosola, with his dying speech, again deferring Malateste's request for an explanation of how Antonio died, offers half a consolation:

In a mist: I know not how;
 Such a mistake as I have often seen
 In a play. Oh, I am gone:
 We are only like dead walls, or vaulted graves
 That, ruin'd, yields no echo. Fare you will;
 It may be pain: but no harm to me to die
 In so good a quarrel. Oh this gloomy world,
 In what shadow, or deep pit of darkness
 Doth, womanish, and fearful, mankind live?

Let worthy minds ne'er stagger in distrust
 To suffer death or shame for what is just:
 Mine is another voyage. (5.5.93-104)

Reducing his murder of Antonio to a tragic error of theatre, Bosola dismisses its significance. His figure of the unechoing grave reiterates Antonio's dismissal of the echo in the Duchess' voice, and like Antonio at the end of that scene, Bosola uses the emotional continence of the grave to rhetorically attempt to recapture his claims to meritorious action (rather than revenge) through Stoic heroism; dismissing pain as "no harm" if he dies in a good quarrel – Antonio's – he attempts to perform a virtuous Stoic death. But Bosola's mind turns back to the world, and even in rejecting it, the terms he uses to describe it reimplicate himself. In his concluding line, Bosola admits that he is irrevocably part of the melancholy pit of darkness in which men are gendered female by their fear. For the last time, Bosola misogynistically suppresses feeling, but this time he cannot escape implicating himself in it. He avoids saying where he is going – but given his earlier frantic attempts to avoid despair, and his failure to return before dying to any form of penitential language, we can all guess.

To conclude this section I will argue that the Duchess in her captivity also experiences a conversion; unlike Ferdinand's and Bosola's, hers lasts – to death. Her conversion is also legible as a form of Protestant antimaterialism, involving a new understanding of martyrdom as independent of calculable or transferrable merit. Her triumph is that she manages to die with greater faith than the others, avoiding the religious melancholy of despair without rejecting either her body or her feelings. Yet despite rejecting the Catholic theories of meritorious martyrdom and transferability of grace she introduces a different disturbing moral lacuna in her striking forgiveness of Bosola and her stranglers. To her both the material means and agents of death are irrelevant. This abandonment of moral agency is another way her conversion differs from Ferdinand's and Bosola's; they are compelled to live, and thus act, after their conversions. Her brief isolation in captivity limits her sphere of action to the affective and internal, simplifying her example but also limiting its practical application.

As I discussed near the beginning of this section, when Bosola shows the Duchess the wax figures of Antonio and his son and advises that she “wisely cease to grieve / For that which cannot be recovered” (4.1.60), she refuses this Stoicizing consolation and asks to be left bound to his body to freeze to death. Though Bosola tells her that she “must live,” she offers to emulate the model of Portia; then when Bosola observes that she is despairing and reminds her that she is a “Christian” (74), she argues that “the church enjoins fasting: I’ll starve myself to death” and offers the example of a “wretch that’s broke upon the wheel,” both models suggesting Christian martyrdom (75-80). Against Bosola and another servant’s repeated entreaties, and claims to pity her, she momentarily considers another position: “I shall grow one / Of the miracles of pity. I’ll go pray” (92-3). But then she reverses course just as quickly: “No, I’ll go curse” she adds (94). She concludes the scene cursing the stars and her brothers: “Let them like tyrants / Never be rememb’red, but for the ill they have done: / let all the zealous prayers of mortified / Churchmen forget them ... Let Heaven, a little while, cease crowning martyrs / To punish them” (102-107).

There is a careful logic to the Duchess’s argument suggested by Bosola’s outburst calling her curse “uncharitable” (105). If Bosola pities her, he does so by turning her into an example, a “miracle of pity” whose spiritual benefit accrues to the observer. More generally, her wish that her brothers not be prayed for after their deaths acknowledges the Catholic theory of the treasury of grace, by which grace earned by martyrs is transferrable through prayer or indulgences to others. The Duchess, aware that her brothers are after her material wealth, also fears that her death will somehow benefit them spiritually. Her anger then reflects Protestant critiques of Catholic instrumentalization of martyrdom, but also her own particular dilemma. Ferdinand wants to drive her into despair, but even a graceful death that avoids despair in this sense may benefit her murderers.

But it is only in the next scene that the Duchess realizes that her death in captivity is truly inevitable. Though Bosola ends this scene by pleading with Ferdinand to stop tormenting her, to transform her captivity into a penitential exercise rather than pursuing his attempt to drive her to despair, the melancholy which the Duchess begins the next scene by

acknowledging is neither a stage of penitence nor of despair. Indeed, we need not think the Duchess has any great cause for penitence; her melancholy can be merely taken as a mixture of anger and grief. But her anger has subsided, and before the madman masque she evinces a strange calm:

I'll tell the a miracle,
I am not mad yet, to my cause of sorrow.
Th' heaven o'er my head seems made of molten brass,
The earth of flaming sulphur, yet I am not mad.
I am acquainted with sad misery,
As the tann'd galley-salve is with his oar.
Necessity makes me suffer constantly.
And custom makes it easy. (4.2.24-31)

Despite experiencing the sensory distortions of the mad, her insistence on her sanity and her ability to endure sorrow distinguish her from both the Neostoic and from the madmen who will soon masque before her.

Indeed, after the madmen leave she questions Bosola, who has entered in disguise with them. Displaying her sanity by suspecting his, she asks if he recognizes her; Bosola's response is construable equally as a clichéd bit of Stoic *contemptus mundi* or as the delusions of a melancholic contemptuous of the body and epistemically isolated:

Thou art a box of worm seed, at best, but a salvatory of green mummy: what's this flesh? A little cruded milk, fantastical puff-paste: our bodies are weaker than those paper prisons boys use to keep flies in: more contemptible, since ours is to preserve earth-worms: didst thou ever see a lark in a cage? Such is the soul in the body: this world is like her little turf of grass, and the heaven o'er our heads, like her looking-glass, only gives us a miserable knowledge of the small compass of our prison.
(4.3.123-131)

Oddly heaven is figured here as unknowable; the contempt of the world is almost identified with despair. In response, the Duchess asserts her worldly identity with her famous line, "I am the Duchess of Malfi still" (139), but does not directly dispute this statement, whether Stoic consolation or melancholic delusion. Bosola presses the case; in his odd description of what the Duchess calls "affect[ing] fashion in the grave" he criticizes the new funerary monument style of figures not looking up to heaven as formerly, but "as their minds were wholly bent upon the world, / The self-same way they

seem to turn their faces,” hands on their cheeks as if nursing a tootheache (152-159). Bosola’s criticism of worldliness echoes Ferdinand’s dying boast to “affect” high concerns of heaven, and both mention toothaches as something to be Stoically transcended.

But the Duchess’s final speech does provide a series of subtle rebuttals. When the executioners arrive, the Duchess greets them with a statement of forgiveness, explaining that “the apoplexy, catarrh, or cough o’th’ lungs / Would do as much as they do” (4.2.205-6). When Bosola presses whether the manner of her death, strangling, should terrify her, she elaborates:

What would it pleasure me, to have my throat cut
With diamonds? Or to be smothered
With cassia? Or to be shot to death, with pearls?
I know death hath ten thousand several doors
For men to take their exits: and ’tis found
They go on such strange geometrical hinges,
You may open them both ways: any way, for Heaven sake,
So I were out of your whispering. Tell my brothers,
That I perceive death, now I am well awake,
Best gift is, they can give, or I can take. (4.2.209-223)

By denying the relevance of the material cause of her death, the Duchess transcends Ferdinand’s claim to be cut like diamonds by his own dust. This transcendence is anti-materialist in vehicle (the denial of diamonds, pearls, cassia) but its tenor is an even more radical refusal of moral calculation (the indifference to murderers). Yet it is also radically unlike Julia’s forgiveness of the Cardinal for murdering her as an act of justice, and also radically unlike Julia’s occasionally morally redemptive sensuality. The geometrical hinges of the doors of death may be interpreted as eliding the difference between murder and suicide (Brennan 4.2.215-18n.). With her claim to be awake, the Duchess asserts that the rational position in these circumstances is to deny the difference between martyrdom and suicide that worried her in the preceding scene; here death is like grace, a gift, and nothing transcendent is earned or lost by an act of the will. The Duchess’s use of the heretofore misogynist geometrical discourse here transcends both sensuality and the question of will, evading the accusations of hysterical incapacity tied to her body in life.

But in doing so, despite her rejection in death of an overtly hedonistic sensuality, the Duchess never accepts Bosola's dualistic trope of the soul as a bird in the cage of the body. That would be acquiescing to her brothers' slanders, which are, after all, accusations of her body. She only gradually lets go of the body and passions she has asserted since her auto-iconoclastic performance for Antonio. First she asks that her body be bestowed upon her women, recalling her midwife and casting death as a kind of bodily birth. Then she kneels, explaining that "heaven gates are not so highly arch'd / As princes palaces: they that enter there / Must go upon their knees" (4.2.230), treating the bodily performance of humility, expressing the obedience to the divine will she earlier claimed (with reference to her brothers) was in her blood (166), as a necessary conveyance for her journey. Finally, she presents her brothers' fixation on her body as a form of beastly cannibalism: "Go tell my brothers, when I am laid out / They then may feed in quiet" (232-3). Only then will her body be rendered inert matter for consumption, but by describing her brothers as beasts (who feed rather than eat) she places them outside the domain of grace entirely.

7 Secular aporias: love, friendship, and political agency

When in death the Duchess's body plays a variety of incompatible roles in sequence, satisfying first her own spiritual needs, then the social sympathies of her women servants, and finally the antipathetic devouring of her brothers, the reductive essentializing of the first half of the play is finally rendered incoherent. Bosola's dying claim that "we are only like dead walls, or vaulted graves / That, ruin'd, yields no echo" (5.5.96-7) expresses a similar inertness of the dead body and by extension of matter itself. But if the religious argument of the last section has been to emphasize the importance of feeling over action, this emphasis is available only to the Duchess in death. Living bodies must consider both how their passions can be made active, and how feelings can be induced. But Antonio and Delio's hope to materially effect atonement by showing Antonio and his son's living bodies to the Cardinal is materially and morally quite different from Ferdinand's attempt to drive the Duchess to despair with wax figures of supposedly dead bodies. While the play's religious argument has emphasized the primacy of affect over material causation, in these examples and others the play

repeatedly stumbles in attempting to operationalize this difference in its treatments of love, service, and politics.

In this section of the chapter I want to describe the play's articulation of these basically secular aporias of action, aporias which the play, I think, hardly thinks are resolvable. In identifying these aporias I have found to be particularly helpful a careful elaboration of the play's ring structure, which I have developed beyond Roy Eriksen's sketch and describe in the appendix. In what follows I will occasionally refer to matching scenes, that is, scenes which are symmetrically spaced around the play's central visit to Loretto. In all cases the formal identification of paired scenes has informed my readings, though I think the readings are sufficient to stand on their own.

One helpful way to detect these secular aporias is through the play's materialist testing of the Renaissance discourse of friendship. Laurie Shannon has described the way friendship tends to play a double role. On the one hand, it is figured as a relationship of "sovereign amity," a utopian political arrangement of freely entered contract between sovereigns enabled by a near-ontological identity particularly in gender and station. Friends are figured as other selves, friendship a private relationship that transcends public or political obligations, and is guaranteed by the pseudo-Stoic constancy (or independence from externals) of the parties. But on the other hand, friendship can also be a figure for difference, particularly when it is used to characterize friendly but dissenting counsel either among equals or, as more often, from a subordinate to a ruler. Friendship here creates a liberty of frank speech more properly understood as a duty, and exists in opposition to flattery (Shannon ch. 1). Moreover, as Shannon briefly observes, true friendship is sometimes discussed as a kind of sympathy similar to natural or occult sympathies found between inanimate objects in the natural world, though sometimes with an ironic or skeptical tone (Shannon gives the example of Erasmus's colloquy on friendship (46)). That the play's descriptions of natural sympathy sometimes use the language of friendship – for example, the Duchess worries that the apricots and her stomach are not "friends" (2.1.158) and Ferdinand calls the Duchess, his twin, his "dearest friend" (4.2.274) – suggests that friendship discourses are used in the play to

think about the duality Shannon identifies together with the ontological problems my chapter has been concerned with, the undermining of theories of material sympathy.

Though marriage is traditionally excluded from friendship discourses given the tendency of early modern marriage to be conceived of as hierarchical and friendship as homonormative (Shannon ch. 2), several critics have read the Duchess's marriage to Antonio as an example of the developing ideology of companionate marriage, and observed that the Duchess carefully elicits Antonio's consent to a marriage which she attempts to construct as one between equals (eg. Rose, *Expense*; Whigham 207-8). Her appeals to a shared Stoic interiority shielding them from politics and discord, discussed earlier, are legible as part of friendship discourse. But probably the most obvious way in which this arrangement can be said to paradoxically draw on friendship discourse while revealing its difference is the Duchess's closing invitation to Antonio to "like the old tale, in *Alexander and Lodowick*, / Lay a naked sword between us, keep us chaste" (1.2.413-414). As Elizabeth Brennan's editorial note explains, "the friends Alexander and Lodowick were so alike that they could change places without anyone noticing. When Lodowick married the Princess of Hungaria in Alexander's name, he laid a naked sword between the Princess and himself each not so that his friend would not be wronged" (Brennan ed. 1.2.413n). While the Duchess appeals to friendship models in her proposal to Antonio, in the marriage bed sexual difference distinguishes them, and it is this difference that Antonio fears, since (through the pregnancy beginning the next scene) it exposes him to her brothers' anger, refuting the Duchess's claims to the security of friendship.

But there are other figures of marriage in the scene, which seem to decline only gradually to the complex example of Alexander and Lodowick. First, there is the legal-sacramental understanding of private marriage with a witness as "absolute marriage," a "sacred Gordian" (1.2.393-4) which the Duchess invokes as Cariola emerges from the arras as Antonio kneels. But then Antonio qualifies it by figures of affective unity and ontological sympathy:

Antonio: And may our sweet affections, like the spheres
Be still in Motion

Duchess: Quick'ning, and make
 The like soft music.
 Antonio: That we may imitate the loving palms
 Best emblem of a peaceful marriage,
 That nev'r bore fruit divided.
 Duchess: What can the Church force more? (1.2.395-401)

Antonio prays that fortune will never divide them, and the Duchess exclaims "'tis the Church / That must but echo this" (1.2.405-6). The loving palms – an emblem of natural sympathy – the harmony of the spheres, fortune itself, and the Church must all be in unison. After this build-up, sexual difference is the gap through which discord enters.

Antonio's figurations of his marriage with the Duchess change as the play progresses, revealing a growing gap between himself and the Duchess expressed in his changing balance of emphasis on ontological sympathy, affect, fortune, and religion. In the closet scene before Ferdinand confronts the Duchess, he playfully advises Cariola to marry by invoking Ovidian myth:

O fie upon this single life: forgo it.
 we read how Daphne, for her peevish flight
 Became a fruitless bay-tree; Sirinx turn'd
 To the pale empty reed; Anaxarete
 Was frozen into marble: whereas those
 Which married, or prov'd kind unto their friends
 Were, by a gracious influence, transhap'd
 Into the olive, pomegranate, mulberry:
 Became flowers, precious stones, or eminent stars. (3.2.25-32)

Here the possibility of antipathy is hinted at but euphemized as the fruitless rejection of love; the language of friendship masks the danger of rape, and sexual receptivity is rewarded with an influence that transforms the bearer herself into a source of natural sympathy. Antonio's retelling of the myth drastically unsettles the categories of freedom, consent, causation, and equality so carefully aligned in the marriage scene. And

Ferdinand's subsequent entrance disrupts the fiction of the marriage-as-friendship as a private utopian polity.¹⁴⁹

In the later paired scene, when Antonio and the Duchess are exiled from Ancona and prepare to separate, Antonio cites providence, not fortune, as the force tearing them apart. Bosola on his first visit calls Antonio's suspicious mind base and drawn to fear like adamant draws iron, but Antonio refrains from the language of material sympathy. The Duchess herself agrees with Antonio, like him advising separation to avoid an ambush, but despite this consent in strategy Antonio's consolation appeals to a new, non-sympathetic figuration of their situation:

Since we must part
Heaven hath a hand in't: but no otherwise
Than as some curious artist takes in sunder
A clock, or watch, when it is out of frame
To bring't in better order. (3.5.59-63)

Providence here tears them apart, but temporarily, restoring bonds which are merely mechanical or artificial anyway; the Duchess can only persist in hoping for their otherworldly unity "in the eternal church" (3.5.68). As already discussed, Antonio frames the coldness in his kiss which the Duchess finds objectionable as a Stoic constancy – but this is no longer the duality of friendship or a friendly marriage. Antonio's neglect of the echo is the final stage in their separation, marking his abandonment in some sense of both ontological and affective sympathy.

The Cardinal and Julia's arguments about lovesickness and projections of inconstancy are simpler versions of Antonio and the Duchess's tested understanding of love as a relationship underwritten by ontological sympathy. They are simpler, essentially, because they are not complicated by the discourse of friendship. The closest Julia and the Cardinal get to such a discourse is Julia's appeal, while acting as Bosola's spy, to be treated not like a tyrant's flatterer but as worthy of sharing the Cardinal's counsel. The

¹⁴⁹ One might read this myth against my chapter on *Midsummer*, which evokes similar understandings of fertile influence as grace, fears of metamorphosis, and paranoia about sexual difference in marriage. cp. also my chapter on *The Tempest* for a resolution of these problems.

wooing scene between Julia and Bosola also parodies the Duchess's wedding scene, but does so most markedly in Julia's appeal to ontological sympathy – lovesickness, the magical match between her eyes and Bosola's face – and in her insistence nevertheless on forms of hierarchy, even inverted ones: she demands wooing in paradoxical Petrarchan conceits and then offers, as a great lady of pleasure, to provide Bosola's living. We can read Julia's more obvious failures as a product of her inability to draw on the discourse of friendship, but we are left wondering whether friendship itself is entirely reliable in the play. I will argue in what follows that even homonormative friendship in the play is also complicated by the play's ontological uncertainty and rendered as suspect as love. It is not merely that true friendship is made more difficult to detect because the dangers of its traditional twin, flattery, are amplified by the epistemic uncertainty and intrigue of the play; rather in stripping friendship from any pretense to ontological grounding the utopian likeness it posits becomes even more impossible to articulate in practice. Likeness itself becomes almost impossible to imagine as an operational force.

It is worth commenting here that treating marital love and friendship as existing along a continuum is a big change from a *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Whereas marriage in that play was freighted by both sacramental possibilities and oppressive patriarchy, this play only glances at marriage's sacramentality, though it is not fully confident that friendship discourses can provide an alternative account for marriage that can overcome gender differences. The homosocial female friendships I described in *Midsummer* are shifted into a spiritual register of edification in a way that is impossible for the Neostoic male friendships of this play. My chapter on *The Tempest* will suggest a different voluntaristic understanding of marriage that adopts covenantal theology to frame it as a free bond between possible *unequals*.

Though Delio and Antonio spend the entire play asserting their friendship, in many ways Bosola and Antonio have the more obvious grounds for sympathy. We in fact know very little about Delio's station or ambitions in life. His moral code seems to be entirely oriented around prudence; he is quick to suggest unsavory stratagems, such as blaming Bosola for poisoning the apricots and appears to attempt to hire Julia as his prostitute-informer. On the other hand Bosola routinely expresses orthodox moral judgements, even

if he apologetically justifies his breaking of these codes (his justifications are many – self-interest, compulsion, gratitude, etc). At least in their ideal moral codes, Antonio and Bosola are more closely matched. Not only does Antonio hesitate before threatening to blame Bosola for poisoning the apricots, a form of deception that he finds personally corrupting, but he also expresses a surprising sympathy for Bosola in the first scene after Delio describes him as a cheated hit-man:

Tis great pity
He should be thus neglected, I have heard
He's very valiant. This foul melancholy
Will poison all his goodness, for, I'll tell you,
If too immoderate sleep be truly said
To be an inward rust unto the soul;
It then doth follow want of action
Breeds all black malcontents, and their close rearing,
Like moths in cloth, do hurt for want of wearing. (1.1.73-81)

Not only does Antonio blame Bosola's moral failures on melancholy, he describes them as failures to act. Surely murder is not a failure to act, but an immoral action; Antonio seems to foreshadow Bosola's later sense of the urgent need for penitent action. But despite his reference to the soul here, Antonio seems to be thinking more of the dangers of repressed political ambition expressed in the figure of the melancholic malcontent; possibly Antonio senses in Bosola his own suppressed ambition.

This interpretation becomes clearer after Antonio's marriage. Bosola having nominally joined the Duchess's household as her horse-provisor now has even more in common with Antonio, her nominal steward, but their situation creates a competitive interest for advancement that precludes their friendship. (Perhaps there is even a nominal relationship of hierarchy within the household, though that Bosola's preferment is at Ferdinand's urging complicates any strict hierarchy.) Their chafing at the beginning of the apricot scene voices these tensions: Antonio calls Bosola's melancholy a fashionable pose of wise contemplation and a strategy to avoid appearing conceited with his preferment, and accuses him of being tempted by the same devil of ambition he feared in the marriage scene ("You would look up to Heaven, but I think / The devil, that rules i'th' air, stands in your light" (2.1.87-89)); while Bosola for his part claims to be simple

and honest, decrying Antonio's pride at being "lord of the ascendant, chief man with the duchess" (2.1.99-100) and denying his own ambition. Invoking devils and astrology as confounding forces within the tight hierarchy of preferment is way to ontologize the opposite of friendship, competition. How can these men survive with such antipathy within the same household? This exchange comes right after Bosola's hostile attack on the old lady's "scurvy face-physic" and his contemptuous dismissal of Castruchio and her, telling them to go lustfully "couple" their rotting bodies. Like the elderly couple, Bosola and Antonio co-exist somehow despite their obvious reasons for antipathy.

In the matching scene, after Julia is killed, Bosola and the Cardinal confront each other this time as moral equals, recognizing each other as what the Cardinal calls "fellow murderers" (5.2.291), with their (in Bosola's phrase) colours stripped off; like Bosola's cynical characterization of the lustful old couple whose essential ugliness is revealed, there is no sympathy here, when sympathy is understood as affection. Though Bosola expresses reservations about the Cardinal's promise of fortune if he goes through with the murder of Antonio, the Cardinal dismisses Bosola's melancholy. This is very like Antonio's dismissal of Bosola's melancholy in 2.1. The desire for material advancement can appear to hold both pairs together despite their antipathy. Yet Bosola is only pretending to serve the Cardinal, as he pretended before to merely serve the Duchess. But in both cases Bosola is construable as acting on his own behalf, though he tells himself he is serving a second and different master. In 2.1 he ostensibly serves Ferdinand, a service which he sees as disabling his own agency, framing his self-interest as the compulsion of the corrupting devils of money, the need to show gratitude, calling himself Ferdinand's "familiar ... a quaint invisible devil in the flesh .. an intelligencer" (1.2.180-183). In 5.2 he vows to serve Antonio's cause, to join his arm with the arm of justice, but hopes to be raised by penitence, an another subtle form of ambition. In both situations then Bosola's agency is strategically deferred; promises of service and friendship are equally impossible because of competing interests, self-interest above all. The utopian fiction of friendship is doubly (or triply) impossible.

Despite their mutual hostility, though Bosola and Antonio's mixed interests are relatively transparent to the audience, they are not so to each other. The horoscope scene (in which

Bosola encounters Antonio in the dark casting a horoscope for his first child against a sonic background of the Duchess's shrieks of labour pain) forces Antonio and Bosola to engage in a complex double-bluff; even though they resent each other as members of the household, they do not suspect each others secret roles (husband to the Duchess and intelligencer to Ferdinand). Thus while continuing their mutual chafing about courtly ambition, they continue to call each other friends until, fearing their secrets will be discovered, they break out in mutual accusation. Antonio's cover story of casting an astrological figure to discover the identity of the supposed jewel-thief turns into an outright accusation of Bosola for poisoning the apricots; Bosola simply accuses Antonio of being a "false steward" (2.3.35), anticipating the lie the Duchess will use to cover his flight. This layering of bluffs and blinds reveals how hard it can be to discover not only who one's friends are but who one's enemies are, and that it can be even harder to ground their hostility in something concrete. Like his lantern, which Bosola calls a "false friend" (2.3.54) since it reveals its user while allowing him to see, Antonio's supposedly judicial astrology backfires, determining not Bosola's (or the notional thief's) guilt, but instead, when a natal horoscope is discovered by Bosola, revealing the existence of a child. But Antonio's fatherhood remains concealed, his name blotted by a mysterious nosebleed. Though before this scene, Delio argued that Antonio should ignore his superstitions, and bids Antonio farewell as he leaves for Rome by insisting that "old friends like old swords still are trusted best" (2.2.75), the mysterious nose bleed itself is arguably more effective in helping Antonio than Delio's Roman espionage. As so often with the play's *sententiae*, their triteness undermines their authority; the juxtaposition of the nosebleed with Delio's nostalgic – and, it must be said, superstitious – appeal to old swords suggests that friendship, along with its promises and legible signs, may itself may be a superstition.

While Julia does not agree to spy for Delio, she eventually agrees to spy for Bosola. Though her appeals to the Cardinal are only a weak approximation of friendship, Bosola's use of her mimics his earlier use of the apricots in the matching scene to investigate the Duchess: just as Julia is a false friend to the Cardinal, the apricots are false friends to the Duchess' stomach (recall, she observes that the "this green fruit and

my stomach are not friends” (2.1.159)). As well as complicating ontological understandings of friendship, it is a stunning model of the way instrumental politics tend to dehumanize their participants; even as Julia herself attempts to deny Bosola’s agency (calling him the jewel to her thief), the reverse is ironically the case, and he discards her as easily as the apricots. But even well-intentioned friendship can be used instrumentally against the friend. For example, the Cardinal advises Bosola to find Antonio by tracing his friend Delio (5.2.126). In a more complicated example that is, significantly, paired with the horoscope scene, Delio *pretends* to be a false-friend – that is, to formally request the ownership of Antonio’s land which has reverted in his absence to Pescara. Ostensibly Delio does this to investigate who is receiving his property, but the request malfunctions strangely.

The land-transfer scene (5.1), which introduces an otherwise meaningless plot complication, seems purely designed to test the transcendental limits of friendship along with the possibility of detecting and operationalizing its signs in practice. It is formally paired with the horoscope scene, and whereas that scene proposed how the astrological calculation of antipathy could backfire, this scene demonstrates how the calculation of friendship through an assessment of interest can backfire too. The scene begins with Antonio asking Delio to advise him on the likelihood of reconciliation with the Aragonian brothers. Delio shrewdly advises him to follow the money; though the brothers have promised him safe conduct to Milan, they’ve also forced Pescara to seize his lands and their dependents are now requesting Antonio’s revenues. “I cannot think they mean well to your life, / That do deprive you of your means of life, / Your living” (5.1.11-12) he concludes. The frustrated Antonio doesn’t want to hear this counsel, complaining “you are still an heretic / To any safety I can shape myself” (5.1.13-14). When Delio makes his request of Pescara, Pescara briefly replies, “you are my friend. But this is such a suit / Nor fit for me to give, nor you to take” (5.1.21-22). Julia’s arrival interrupts them, and, backed by a letter from the Cardinal, she demands the lands and receives them, with Pescara warmly protesting his friendship to the Cardinal. When Julia leaves, Pescara offers this explanation to the angry Delio:

It was Antonio's land: not forfeited
 By course of law; but ravish'd from his throat
 By the Cardinal's entreaty: it were not fit
 I should bestow so main a piece of wrong
 upon my friend: 'tis a gratification
 Only due to a strumpet; for it is injustice.
 Shall I sprinkle the pure blood of innocents
 To make those followers I call my friends
 Look ruddier upon me? I am glad
 This land, tane from the owner by such a wrong,
 Returns again unto so foul an use,
 As salary for his lust. Learn, good Delio,
 To ask noble things of me, and you shall find
 I'll be a noble giver. (5.1.41-53)

Antonio and Delio's sardonic comments on this reply underline the obvious, that Pescara's figure of the corruption of bloody-money is too rigid and naive a position in this situation, particularly since Delio could easily transfer the lands (or its revenues) to his friend later on. Pescara reads Delio's suit as a betrayal of his friendship by himself positing an inappropriate ontologizing of interests in money. Ironically, Bosola's use of Julia as an epistemic probe in the next scene, while echoing Delio's use of himself has much more corrupting results; the blood of Julia, we can't help but feel, is partly on Bosola's hands. Pescara is partly right; false friendship *can* corrupt, even if it doesn't here.

But that Julia is the recipient of the land helps us recall Delio's attempt to bribe her with money and her sensual demurrals; Pescara's figure of the gift as unfit for giving and taking also recalls the Duchess's antimaterialist figuration of death as a gift with uncertain agency. These examples suggest that both Pescara and Delio may be in error here. But though Delio and Antonio seems to respond with sardonic irony, when Pescara leaves Antonio seems to praise Pescara's nobility. The moral impulse behind his refusal seems to elicit admiration, and we should recall that he is introduced as an admirably brave and experienced soldier. Perhaps this is why Antonio concludes the scene vowing to confront the Cardinal, hoping that his shape will magically draw the poison out of him eliciting sympathy, and moreover why Delio promises to help: "I'll second you in all danger: and, howe'er, / My life keeps rank with yours" (5.1.74-75). Though earning

Antonio's reaffirmation of their friendship, this reversal of his initial calculation of the Cardinal's interests also seems an indulgence in superstition, which operates by asserting an identity or "rank" with Antonio even in assuming deadly risk. Against Antonio's initial accusation of heresy, Delio now becomes his brave, even fanatically faithful, brother-in-arms.

In their next scene together, the echo scene, Delio resumes his attempt to dissuade Antonio, only to abandon it again at the scene's end. This repeated pattern draws our attention to one limiting case of friendship Shannon has described, the distinction between friendly but harshly disagreeing counsel and flattery. While marking one form of failure of likeness in friendship, it also marks one of friendship's chief obligations. The possibility that Delio's abandonment of dissuasion should be read as a form of flattery – at least insofar as it is a failure of friendship – should not be entirely discounted. I will return to Delio at the end of this section.

But as Shannon describes, the flattery/friendship opposition also operates between superiors and their subordinates, particularly in the humanist understanding of kings and counsellors. Bosola's eventual shift to Antonio's side occurs through his gradual abandonment of belief in the ontological basis of subordination; his initial description of himself as Ferdinand's "familiar" spirit, forced by devils called angels (money) to obey (1.2.178-187), gradually transforms into dissenting counsel. First in a meaningless quibble, he disputes Ferdinand's self-description as unfathomable, earning praise as a friend not a flatterer (3.1.86ff). But his urgent counsel to cease torturing the Duchess and allow her to instead pursue penitence (4.1.115ff) is rejected; the discourse of friendship in this subordinating sense is limited in its efficacy by its confinement to counsel rather than the direct contradictory action Ferdinand later wishes Bosola had taken (4.2.267ff). I'd like to argue briefly that Bosola's crisis in being forced to murder the Duchess results in his abandonment of the discourse of friendship and a corresponding new sense of his agency as an individual. His use of masks during the murder scene and indeed during the capture of the Duchess seem to mark his transitioning senses of allegiance, hiving off a space for dissent which is itself marked as a form of dissimulation. Moreover, abandoned by Ferdinand he begins to adopt different rhetoric that struggles towards agency; first, he

plans to model himself on the example of the Cardinal, pretending to be his servant even as he works against him, adopting his more subtle tactics of dissimulation (“I must follow his example; / There cannot be a surer way to trace, / Than that of an old fox” (5.2.146-8)). As Shannon observes, friendship is sometimes phrased in the language of exemplarity (40-41), so this is legible as another form of similarity close to friendship, even if its purposes are hostile. Adopting the Cardinal’s intensified tactics of dissimulation, Bosola has no more need of masks, even as he betrays Julia. Moreover, since he is trying to aid Antonio, this is perhaps legible, as Bosola’s claim to join arms with Antonio suggests, as an act of friendship to Antonio; he claims to join Antonio’s cause. But after he accidentally kills Antonio, Bosola’s interrogation of Antonio’s servant reveals a new understanding of himself as incomparably unique:

Bosola: Thou seem’st to have lov’d Antonio?
 Servant: I brought him hither,
 To have reconcil’d him to the Cardinal.
 Bosola: I do not ask thee that.
 Take him up, if thou tender thine own life,
 And bear him where the Lady Julia
 Was wont to lodge. Oh, my fate moves swift.
 I have this Cardinal in the forge already,
 Now I’ll bring him to th’hammer. (O direful misprision!)
 I will not imitate things glorious,
 No more than base: I’ll be mine own example.
 On, on: and look thou represent, for silence,
 The thing thou bear’st. (5.4.72-83)

The nameless servant, whether out of fear or honesty, will not admit to loving Antonio but will, out of self-interest, imitate his corpse’s silence. Like his dying claim that dead bodies leave no echoes, or Delio’s dismissal of the Duchess’s ghostly echoing warnings, Bosola seems to understand from the servant that the duties of love and friendship do not transcend death, even if they were legible to begin with; Bosola and the servant’s mutual allegiance to Antonio in life will not bond them now. Bosola’s parodic construction of the servant’s imitative friendship with Antonio’s corpse is fulfilled when Bosola remorselessly kills the servant in the next scene to prevent him from opening the door (5.5.35). His claim to be his own example, even as it marks his awareness of the failure of imitating the Cardinal by acting in the dark, expresses a uniqueness that denies the

very possibility of the likeness friendship or even service imagines. In its indifference to both glorious and base models it also suggests a disturbing amorality as the price of this supposed freedom to act, the escape from the demands of service, hierarchy, or friendship.

But political flattery and friendship are embedded in an even more polarizing ontological scheme which frames the play. Likeness in the play is not only horizontal, but also vertical; Antonio's opening speech describing the corruptions of the court as a poison flowing from the top, and idealizing the French king's moral example as a pure fountain (1.1.5-22), views hierarchical likeness as a kind of (positive or negative) contamination or contagion, which in the negative case requires true counsel rather than flattery to check it.¹⁵⁰ Soon afterward, Bosola analyzes the failure of this model of rule to fulfill its material promises, or rather the way corrupt princes like Ferdinand and the Cardinal fail to materially share their spoils, but instead manipulate expectations of reward without paying them; he uses the memorable figure of soldiers like himself who receive nothing for their service but "a kind of geometry" as "last supportation," comparing the slings of bed-ridden soldiers in the hospital, arranged head to foot, to the hierarchical arrangement of places in court (1.1.49-67). Bosola demonstrates that corruption like his own can stem not from material contamination, but by its mere expectation. When it is convenient, then, Bosola clearly perceives the failures of ontological figurations of rule; this is not surprising since his supposed status as "court-gall," in Antonio's analysis, exceeds the constrained liberty of the friendly counselor by its concealed ambition (1.1.22-28). And in the matching scene, as Bosola confronts the Cardinal when they are both mortally wounded, he revisits this geometric figure by responding to the Cardinal's observation that "thou hast thy payment too" with the observation that "I do glory / That thou, which stood'st like a huge pyramid / Begun upon a large and ample base , / Shalt end in a little point, a kind of nothing" (5.5.72-78). Whereas the Cardinal's "payment" severs the

¹⁵⁰ As I argue here, Enterline's claim that the play presents Ferdinand's melancholy as infecting the entire political realm is only half of the story, requiring supplementation by the disenchantment of both political theory and melancholy.

pseudo-material bonds of service that expectation of payment maintains, so, even more finally, does death – even for Princes.

To conclude this section I return finally to Delio. Delio's closing speech strikingly characterizes the dead bodies of Ferdinand and the Cardinal as essentially, materially, inert, totally inverting Antonio's opening figure of corruption descending from the top. Told that he is too late to help, he seems unsurprised:

I heard so, and
 Was arm'd for't ere I came. Let us make noble use
 Of this great ruin; and join all our force
 To establish this young hopeful gentleman
 In's mother's right. These wretched eminent things
 Leave no more fame behind 'em, than should one
 Fall in a frost, and leave his print in snow,
 As soon as the sun shines, it ever melts
 Both form and matter. I have ever thought
 Nature doth nothing so great for great men,
 As when she's pleas'd to make them lords of truth:
Integrity of life is fame's best friend,
Which nobly, beyond death, shall crown the end. (5.5.109-120)

It is true, the Aragonian brothers are dead, and this provides one form of reconciliation of the two views of political contamination. As we have seen elsewhere, living bodies may act very differently from dead ones. But they are dead because of Bosola, not because of Delio, who offered to risk his life with Antonio but failed to arrive in time. In denying political contamination, as the above discussion suggests, Delio is also implicitly denying the ontological basis of his friendship with the now-dead Antonio. His lack of surprise is striking; conveniently, Delio here becomes something like a kingmaker, if not officially regent for Antonio's young son. More strikingly, the succession Delio lobbies for goes expressly against Antonio's final wish, shared only with Bosola, to "let my son fly the court of kings" (5.4.71); ironically, Antonio's penultimate words request that Bosola "commend me / to Delio" (5.4.68-9). Are these complications, further failures of Delio's friendship, just tragic irony or something more sinister? His striking claim that "integrity of life is fame's best friend / which nobly, beyond death, shall crown the end" is another sentence that sounds tritely unconvincing, especially given the consonance between "integrity" and the dubious "constancy" – and the even more dubious abstraction of the

word “friend” coupling integrity to fame. What does it mean that one of the most willfully dissembling characters in the play ends it praising the merits of being a “lord of truth,” a position he claims to have always adhered to, as he for all intents and purposes seems to ascend a throne? To characterize Delio as indubitably Machiavellian would be an overstatement – his repeated attempts at dissuasion in the last act tend to be interrupted by chance events, like the Duchess’ apparition – but Delio’s character’s thinness and opacity make his motives as morally inscrutable as Bosola’s complex but ironically (to us, if not himself) transparent ones. In Bosola’s case, too much information means that perhaps we can’t decide whether to be a sympathetic or hostile audience; in Delio’s case, we simply don’t know.

8 Humanism, demonology, and metatheatre: transitioning to *The Tempest*

The concluding juxtaposition of Bosola and Delio’s final speeches tests our understanding of the play’s political tone - is it finally optimistic or pessimistic about the politics it presents? These terms are of course too simple. If under Stuart rule, Neostoicism is largely an ideology of careful aristocratic resistance, potentially quietism,¹⁵¹ then Bosola’s final action is not really legible as Neostoic, even though he seems to be the suicide-assassin enabling Delio’s ascendancy. Bosola’s rejection of exemplarity moves beyond even what Richard Tuck has called the “new humanism” of Neostoic and other Tacitist political theorizing; indeed it is a rejection of the very principle of imitation underlying humanisms new and old. Delio’s emergence in the play’s conclusion as a triumphant Tacitean tactician, propagandizing for the humanist ideals of friendship and integrity, renders these ideals suspect, casting them as plausible only under conditions of right rule which are unachievable without pawns like Bosola. New rulers may wipe out the corruptions of the old, but this involves their assassination and replacement by revolution rather than the idealistic humanist reforms produced by friendly counsel. In this way Bosola’s death embodies the paradox Gowland has identified in Burton’s discussion of political melancholy, the “Platonic estimation of the

¹⁵¹ cp. McCrea, Crawford.

vita contemplativa as best suited to a degenerate monarchical polity, yet the positive appraisal of republican activism and utopianism point[ing] to his cherishing of the ideal of the vita activa” (241).

The play’s other overt citation of humanist examples are similarly suspect. Early in the play Antonio appeals to the “Grecian horse” in order to praise “brave horsemanship” as “raising the mind to noble action” (1.2.64-7); but of course, this horse is otherwise known as Trojan and is a model of treachery. Ferdinand’s dying citation of Caesar and Pompey’s deaths along with his description of the fearful sight of the barber eliminating the toothache as “philosophy for you” (5.5.55-61), as already discussed, similarly casts humanist ideals as particularly self-serving. These moments are paired in the ring structure and anchored (note the recurring toothache) in the play’s centre with Delio’s mocking description of Bosola as

a fantastical scholar, like such who study to know how many knots was in Hercules’ club; of what colour Achilles’ beard was, or whether Hector were not troubled with the toothache. He hath studied himself half blear-ey’d, to know the true symmetry of Caesar’s nose by a shoeing-horn: and this he did to gain the name of a speculative man. (3.3.40-46)

Humanism here produces useless scholarship focused on superficial details, constructing rather than the heroic exemplarity of action the singular reputation of the contemplative or speculative scholar. The introduction in the same scene of the figures of Pescara and Malatesta – respectively a brave experienced soldier, and a military theoretician with a toothache – again embody the irreconcilability of this paradoxical understanding of humanism in the play.¹⁵² The figure of the scholar-(sorcerer?)-king embodied by *The Tempest*’s Prospero, as my next chapter will describe, goes some way to reconciling this paradox, though of course Prospero’s exile was the initial result of his neglect of the duties of rule, his becoming more contemplative scholar than active prince.

¹⁵² Pescara and Malatesta also embody distinct epistemic and physical models. Pescara usually posits the existence of material sympathies, for example in the doctor’s cures of Ferdinand or in the corruptions of the land-transfer scene. Malatesta is more aware of the paradoxes of optical and geometric illusions: consider his explanation to Ferdinand that he is chasing his shadow, and his use of models of the battlefield. In analyzing the Cardinal’s desperate cries, Pescara reads them naively (but accurately) as sincere, Malatesta as false cries (as the Cardinal has told him to).

The failure of likeness – whether figured as friendship, natural sympathy or natural corruption – to account for political bonds ontologically in *The Duchess of Malfi* can also be transcended by a different attitude to humanism which the *Tempest* explores. Its utopianism does not act as the utopianism of the discourses of friendship might, simply by imagining away the greater political arena. Rather, as I will argue, the play uses its island setting to attempt to build up politics from physics using the complete philosophical systems of Stoicism¹⁵³ and Epicureanism, and though these attempts fail and must be replaced by a general theory of contract, the play's success is in dramatizing bonds of obligation and temporary affiliation – including love, friendship, and service – which transcend possibly essential differences rather than being grounded in essential similarity. Whereas emotion has a limited role in politics in *The Duchess of Malfi* – except as moral mitigations available only to women, and in a religious sense I will return to shortly – in *The Tempest* emotion becomes perhaps the most important medium of political reciprocity. If *The Duchess of Malfi* struggles with the impossibility of conceiving of emotion as produced by systems of natural sympathy, framing feeling as something to be repressed and dominated, in *The Tempest* the scrutiny of feeling becomes primary.

I have said little in this chapter about demonology *per se* in the play. Partly this is because the subject has been recently explored at length by Mary Floyd-Wilson, who builds on an earlier demonological study by Albert Tricomi by considering the play's demonology as part of early-modern science's work exploring the boundary between the natural and the supernatural. Identifying early modern theories of occult sympathy – the hidden sympathies and antipathies in nature, knowledge of which demons possess – as the main territory of this boundary, Floyd-Wilson reads Ferdinand as a dramatic category paradox in which the audience is unable to determine the degree to which he is a scientist, sorcerer, or possessed. Gendering the argument through the popular discourse of “women's secrets,” occult knowledge of women's bodies which Ferdinand attempts to

¹⁵³ I distinguish Stoicism from Neostoicism here primarily on Stoicism's more comprehensive system which includes a physics. Neostoicism remains mainly an ethical and political philosophy (though this is debated).

investigate, Floyd-Wilson adopts the position that Ferdinand's general blindness to the possibility of demonic causation is itself a form of early modern superstition, the failure to adequately police these boundaries, and marks the plausibility of his possession. Floyd-Wilson presents her argument as a rebuttal to the excessively "secular" readings of Frank Whigham (who reads Ferdinand's incestuous desires as a marker of status-anxiety) and Lynn Enterline (who explores the emotional or psychological dimensions of melancholy), and in her mixture of demonological and scientific reading there is much I agree with. To conclude this chapter, however, I have to qualify this sympathy. There is, after all, a difference between the "secular" readings of Whigham and Enterline and the "secularizing" reading I am suggesting, which represents secularization in process rather than as a *fait accompli*. If, as I have tried to argue, the lunar observations could unsettle the very possibility of natural sympathy, then given Floyd-Wilson's argument, the arena for demonic activity could also find itself being redefined. Since I have argued that the play represents feeling as primary given the new instability of vision and the corollary undermining of theories of natural sympathy explained by *species*, it seems that the important territory for detecting demonic activity might also shift to the feelings. Indeed, as I have described them in passing, most (perhaps all) of the play's suggestions of demonic activity have to do with the fear of delusions correlated with uncontrolled emotion.

In *The Duchess of Malfi* discussions of providence and demonic interference are quite asymmetric; the latter is mentioned more often and more explicitly, and, as Floyd-Wilson has argued, more often remains a real possibility, whereas appeals to providence are fewer and usually fail to materialize. Consider, for example, Antonio's figure in their parting scene of the providential watchmaker who will unite himself and the Duchess, and the Duchess' feeble hope that they will stay together forever in the eternal church. But on the other hand, Bosola and (more dramatically) Antonio's hauntings by the Duchess are dramatized with more emotional intensity than any of the play's citation of demons; as I have argued, their suppression of these hauntings as the product of melancholy again suggests that providential action also shifts its territory to the emotional life. This is consistent with my argument about the play's representation of

religious affect as basically anti-materialist. In *The Tempest*, I will argue, emotion becomes not only the basic ingredient of political life, but also the domain in which providential action is discerned. While drawing on the theological topic of the “discernment of spirits,” the distinction between angelic and demonic agents or, more generally, between spiritual experiences due to God or the devil, the discernment of providential action in *The Tempest* is motivated to political ends; the play’s understanding of providence as discernable through particular patterns of feeling may in theory resolve the secular aporias the *Duchess of Malfi* presents, rendering providence operationalizable in political life.

Finally, while *The Tempest*’s understanding of spiritual experience is also informed by the lunar observations, it seems less interested in theories of vision and their theoretical role in explaining occult influence through *species*, than in a new language of lunar influence mediated by the neutral matter of the air. The airy spirit Ariel is decidedly material, but also, according to early modern understandings of the medical spirits, also nearly consubstantial with the material of the body’s feelings.¹⁵⁴ This scientific understanding of air underwrites the play’s emphasis on affect, even as it attenuates the power of influence, buffering it by removing the unequivocally powerful semiotics preserved in the notion of a *species* which can directly, immutably, move the soul.

But my discussion of the *The Tempest* will treat air more abstractly, as a neutral matter, not quite fully determined or ontologically specified. In this way, I will argue it is as neutral as *The Tempest*’s treatment of theatre, particularly Prospero’s theatre of spirits that, as the revels speech has it, melt into thin air. If in *Midsummer* I argued that theatre was ultimately framed as a potentially edifying but potentially disregardable kind of ritual *adiaphora*, the metatheatrical impulses in *The Duchess of Malfi* are more numerous. For example: The Duchess in captivity counts the world a tedious theatre which she Stoically rejects, but then comes to see it as a form of suffering she endures without rejecting; Ferdinand blames Bosola for acting a villain’s role; Bosola later casts

¹⁵⁴ cp. Paster, “Nervous Tension” and *Humoring the Body*.

himself as a victim of tragic error; Ferdinand tries to drive the Duchess to despair while claiming to try to cure her melancholy with the madmen's masque. Huston Diehl has influentially argued that the play models a Foxeian rhetoric of witnessing, in which spectatorship is a visible act meant to elicit pity and prompt moral self-examination by the audience through the activation of their internal spectator, the Protestant conscience. Juxtaposing Ferdinand's vicious and demonic Catholic theatrics to the Duchess's Protestant martyrdom, as Diehl uses this argument to do (208), is a tempting position. But, as I have tried to show, this oversimplifies the affective anti-materialism of the play's construction of, for example, Bosola's turn to his conscience and the Duchess's analysis and reconstruction of martyrdom (details Diehl generally skims over), an anti-materialism which is fundamentally connected to the problems of moral agency the play's explicit moments of metatheatrical contemplation. In *The Tempest*, therefore, I will describe how Prospero's theatre constructs performances similar both to Ferdinand's tortures – though in Prospero's tormenting of the Neapolitans, attempting to elicit penance rather than despair – and the Duchess's martyrdom (particularly his treatment of Ferdinand). In this way when read spiritually Prospero's theatre spans demonic torment and the positive trials of martyrdom; but more generally it reconsiders the affective anti-materialist impulse of the *Duchess of Malfi* inside a political scheme of affective obligation, using affect as described above to license moral agency. In this scheme, theatre can induce penitence or fail to induce it; but it can also function more mundanely as recreation, reward, or even as mere propaganda.

9 Appendix: The play's ring structure

Roy Eriksen has recently attempted to account for the play's unusual central scene at Loretto and the early death of the Duchess, by arguing that both are part of an overall design. Adapting the earlier impressionistic arguments of critics like Inga-Stina Ewbank and Una Ellis-Fermor that the play is composed based on painting techniques, Eriksen argues that the play repeatedly cites Mannerist painting by combining metaphors of framing devices and metaphors of metamorphosis; moreover he argues that it uses "a perspectival type of plotting" (179) to arrange the play's scenes symmetrically around a thematically significant centre, the visit to the shrine at Loretto, emphasizing the plot's

tragic *peripeteia*. This arrangement of scenes is also known as a ring structure.¹⁵⁵ While Eriksen cites many of the passages I also discuss, his interests are basically concerned with aesthetic form, not with the philosophical questions manifested by or contained within that form. I would therefore like to adapt and extend Eriksen's relatively superficial description of the play's ring structure as a guide for reading off the play's philosophical concerns. The structure is summarized in the table below; scenes placed symmetrically around the centre are placed next to each other in the table. Interpreting the scene at Loretto as the play's representation of a moment of lunar secularization allows corresponding scenes before and after the centre to be read as expressing the accompanying change in perspective on a particular set of issues. This summary is incomplete and its partial analyses are not in any way definitive. Nevertheless, this structure is a map of the play that can be used to deepen or dispute the arguments I make in my chapter. There are of course other notable structural patterns in the play, for example the way Julia's encounter with Bosola parodies the Duchess and Antonio's wedding scene. But the ring structure seems to be the play's broadest structural tool of argument and ignoring it, once it has been described, would be foolish.

In more detail, Eriksen treats 3.3, the scene at Loretto as the unique centre of the play. He identifies certain repetitions which are characteristic of ring structures, for example the reappearance of the ring Antonio "took" in the tournament (1.1.88) as the Duchess' wedding ring which the Cardinal "took" (3.4.37) off the Duchess' finger, linking beginning and middle; he also observes that the first and last speeches are made by Delio. Most significantly he identifies the parallelism of the of what he calls the "echo-scenes": first, there is the end of 1.2, "the wooing-scene that is executed as a variant of the *questioni d'amore*, a type of amorous game in dialogic form designed to reveal the

¹⁵⁵ For sources on the general significance of ring structures in the Renaissance and other periods, see my "Conceiving Bodies, Intertextuality, and Censorship in *Metempsychosis*" *John Donne Journal* 31 (2012): 203-262. *The Tempest* has a ring-structure so obvious that most critics, myself included, don't bother commenting on it, though they and I use it implicitly. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has less obvious symmetries, but they are there. The general movement away from an epistemology based on resemblance to one based on linguistic convention that Tuck and Clark have described as correlated with the new mechanical vision might be expected to put greater pressure on formal structures like rings that can help constrain the arbitrariness of verbal meaning. The baroque and neoclassicism are probably related aesthetic phenomena.

beloved's character and sincerity" (183-4) and takes the form of a *gradatio* of phrases in which Antonio and the Duchess repeat each others' words; second, there is the 5.2, in which Antonio's words echo off the wall of an abandoned church in the Duchess' voice, dramatically embodying the Duchess's earlier claim that the "tis the church / That must but echo this [marriage]" (1.2.405-6). Eriksen identifies several other symmetries in a brief paragraph:

... the use of deception *in bono* practised by the Duchess and Antonio when she feigns sickness to conceal her pregnancy and shrieks of pain when in labour (2.1), and understandable procedure that contrasts with deception *in malo* as a strategy to cover up Ferdinand's madness (5.2) ... Ferdinand's lie to the Duchess that he does not doubt her virtue (3.1) equals his feigned friendship in a letter (3.5). On both occasions his false declarations of love and trust are followed by surprise visits – first into her bedroom (3.2) and then into her cell (4.1). (185)

While I generally accept the symmetries Eriksen describes, I think they are somewhat imprecise, and want to extend them into a more elaborate architectural pattern that expresses the play's thinking through the secularizing implications of the lunar observations. I summarize this pattern in the following table, stressing (as Eriksen suggests) parallel groupings of characters, but also the philosophical issues at stake. Because Eriksen uses a different edition, our scene numberings vary slightly. Because scene breaks are often roughly defined in plays of the period, I have felt free to break scenes when there is a shift of topic or change of characters on stage. I have written these summaries of the scenes to emphasize comparable moments or actions through parallel sequence and phrasing.

1.1 – Delio and Antonio consider the French court and Princes' ability to materially purify or corrupt their courts; Bosola as court-gall but also sinful everyman; Bosola describes the material corruptions of the Cardinal and Ferdinand and his own expectation of reward reduced to mere geometry, slings and a pyramid of injured soldiers.	5.5.73ff (reverse sequence) – Delio plans to establish Antonio's son as the new Duke, stressing the material vanishing of the Cardinal and Ferdinand; Bosola as tragic actor in play, ignoring his own good intentions; Bosola describes the Cardinal's death as reducing his power to the point of a pyramid, a mere nothing.
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1.2.1-68 – Ferdinand and courtiers argue about jousting, the use of deputies in real war, virility; Ferdinand angered by courtier’s joke at his expense; Antonio praises horsemanship as raising the mind to nobility citing the Trojan horse.	5.5.47-72 – Ferdinand enters in martial mode crying for a horse; Ferdinand surprised to find Cardinal on the other side; Ferdinand moralizes using Caesar and Pompey to teach that fear of a greater pain takes way the lesser; Ferdinand dies describing downward descent: “whether we fall by ambition, blood, or lust/ Like diamonds we are cut with our own dust.”
1.2.69-133 - Antonio describes to Delio the nature of the Cardinal at length: his inside, his outside, and his use of proxies; similar portrait of Ferdinand and contrasting portrait of the Duchess.	5.5.1-46 - The Cardinal discusses his conscience; Pescara and Malatesta debate the authenticity of the Cardinal’s cries; Bosola confronts him directly without mediation or lies, comments that Cardinal’s greatness was only outward, and gives him his death wound.
1.2.134-212 - Ferdinand has the Duchess hire Bosola as her horse provisor; the Cardinal insists that Bosola was a better choice than Antonio, and reminds Ferdinand that his own agency in the matter must be concealed; Bosola expects that he will have to kill someone, and laments money and ambition’s ability to overrule his morals; Ferdinand hires Bosola as his spy, and Bosola casts himself as Ferdinand’s “familiar” or “creature.”	5.4.31ff - Bosola overhears the Cardinal vowing that Bosola will die when he has outlived his usefulness, and thinks Ferdinand is also plotting when he says “the Cardinal / would not for a thousand pound the doctor should see it” (37); Bosola accidentally kills Antonio, who in his dying words rejects ambition; Bosola blames fate and vows to be his own example, but forces a servant to carry Antonio’s corpse at sword-point, telling him to “represent [it] for silence.”
1.2.213-265 - Ferdinand and the Cardinal warn the Duchess against falling prey to the sexual temptations of courtiers or of her blood.	5.4.1-30 - The Cardinal warns the courtiers (Pescara, Malatesta especially) not to respond to any cries they hear.
1.2.266ff - Antonio and Duchess’ secret marriage without the church’s endorsement, with Cariola secretly watching (Eriksen’s first echo scene).	5.3 - Antonio speaks with an echo of the wall of a ruined abbey (the Duchess’ voice), with Delio watching (Eriksen’s second echo scene).

2.1.1-111 - Bosola advises Castruchio on courtly advancement and then heckles the Old Lady, finally advising them to indulge their lust with each other despite their corrupt bodies; Bosola and Antonio argue over ambition, Bosola denying his own ambition.	5.2.285ff - the Cardinal confirms that Bosola will kill Antonio, though both are admitted “fellow murderers,” promising an alliance through shared interests; Bosola privately vows to help Antonio, expressing his ambition to be raised up through penitence.
2.1.111-162 - Bosola uses apricots to investigate the Duchess’s body, supposedly suffering from “the mother,” a hysterical disease.	5.2.149-284 - Bosola uses Julia to investigate the cause of Cardinal’s melancholy.
2.1.163ff - Delio advises Antonio to blame Bosola for poisoning the apricots, concealing the Duchess’s pregnancy; Antonio is reluctant to adopt Delio’s advice.	5.2.103-148- The Cardinal pretending not to know of the Duchess’s death hires Bosola to kill Antonio, advising him to use Delio to track him down; Bosola plans to adopt the Cardinal’s methods to pursue his own agenda.
2.2 - Bosola asks Old Lady to confirm his diagnosis of the Duchess’ pregnancy, with servants’ mock rumour of Switzers; Antonio’s fake story about theft to cover up the pregnancy (Eriksen’s deception <i>in bono</i> .)	5.2 - The Doctor diagnoses and attempts to cure Ferdinand’s madness, with Malatesta and Pescara attending; the Cardinal’s fake story about the ghost woman to cover up the cause of madness (Eriksen’s deception <i>in malo</i> .)
2.3 – Horoscope/judicial astrology scene. Antonio and Bosola pretend to be friends at first, but end up accusing and threatening each other; Bosola discovers the horoscope. Bosola calls the lantern he uses a “false friend,” since it illuminates but betrays position. Calculation of crime/inheritance through astrology.	5.1 - Land transfer scene. Delio pretends to be a petitioner to Pescara for Antonio’s land in order to find out where the land is going, but Pescara chides him for this request inappropriate to friendship and gives the land to Julia instead. Antonio reasserts that Delio is his “lov’d and best friend.” Calculation of crime/inheritance through manipulation of interests.
2.4 – The Cardinal and Julia debate lovers’ and women’s constancy; the Cardinal claims to have given Julia her (erotic) freedom like a bird released from a cage; the Cardinal praises Julia’s new sensuality;	4.2.114ff – Bosola attempts to console Duchess to her death with Christian-Stoic clichés of contempt for the body; The Duchess rejects contempt for the body and constantly insists on her identity;

Julia uses the Cardinal's language of sensuality to refuse Delio's attempt to bribe her with money, performing constancy to her husband. Delio ends the scene perplexed and worrying about Antonio.	nevertheless, she dismisses the material means of death, adopting in a qualified sense Bosola's dismissal of materiality; her dying constancy to her servant Cariola, children and women. Ferdinand's "constant" fixation on the Duchess' face; his blaming Bosola for not using his own free will; Her momentary revival a performance of constancy to Antonio. Bosola ends the scene conscience-stricken and planning to help Antonio.
2.5 – Ferdinand rages, calling his knowledge of his sisters' child a mandrake; her sexuality a material pollution, infection, witchcraft, enchantment; The Cardinal disputes his madness; Ferdinand vows to "sleep" until the identity of the father is known.	4.2.1-113 – The masque of madmen, used by Ferdinand to torment the Duchess (though a servant claims it is meant to cure her); the madmen are deranged by professional and sexual anxieties, including unsettling knowledge. The scene begins with the Duchess claiming to be asleep, suffering from melancholy and delusion. (Duchess' figure of caged bird opening the scene carries over – cp 2.4).
3.1 – The Duchess calls Malatesta, proposed as a husband by Ferdinand, a transparent piece of sugar candy. Before and after Antonio and Delio, and then Ferdinand and Bosola, discuss the public perceptions of the fecund, erotically-charged, or hysterical Duchess and the possibility of forcing her to confess or her being forced by witchcraft to fall in love. Ferdinand insists on his uncompassable purposes, but Bosola disputes this earning his praise.	4.1 – Ferdinand torments the Duchess with wax images of her supposedly dead husband and a dead man's hand supposedly belonging to it. Before and after, Bosola and Ferdinand discuss the melancholy Duchess, the goals of her captivity moving from investigation to torture, though Bosola suggests penance. Ferdinand insists that Bosola must see her again, and Bosola argues but relents, insisting however on concealing his identity.
3.2 – Closet scene. The Duchess playfully denies Antonio lodging in her bed for the night; Antonio describes marriage to Cariola using Ovidian figures of erotic sympathy and antipathy; Ferdinand confronts the Duchess with a parable of Reputation, once lost gone forever; Antonio is sent away for embezzling, another cover story; Bosola visits	3.5 – The Duchess and Antonio acknowledge that they are banished from Ancona; Antonio describes his marriage with the duchess using a mechanical figure of a disassembled clock; the Duchess delivers her parable of the salmon and dog-fish, stressing that worth and virtue are known only in extremity; the Duchess sends Antonio away with their eldest son to

counterfeiting fidelity to the Duchess; Bosola praises Antonio despite his low birth earning her trust and confession that he is her husband.	give their children a better chance of safety; Bosola visits twice, once as the agent of Ferdinand bearing ambiguous lies, once as a visored counterfeit; Bosola argues against Antonio's worth, citing his low birth.
3.3 – Ferdinand and Cardinal describe the Duchess as leprous moon, using religion to hide her corruption, in Marian parody; the Cardinal vows to have them banished from Ancona; The Cardinal announces his military commission; Courtiers comment for most of the scene; Malateste and Pescara introduced at length, somewhat critically, and Bosola described as a fantastical scholar.¹⁵⁶	3.4 – The scene at Loretto, the house of the Virgin Mary; the Duchess and Antonio formally banished from Ancona; the Cardinal assumes his armor; a dumbshow, with pilgrims commenting, and a song; the pilgrims discuss the suborning of the church by private power, and its intimidation of free states.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ As I suggest in a note to my conclusion, the introduction of Malateste and Pescara seem to represent the fractioning of contemplative and active humanist ideals embedded Delio's description of Bosola's fantastical scholarship, as well as the splitting of sympathetic and non-sympathetic understandings of physics.

¹⁵⁷ The intertwining of church and state power here perhaps suggests their causing the failure of both active and contemplative humanist ideals.

Chapter 3 - Influence, Providence, and Obligation: *The Tempest's* Covenantal Materialism

1 Introduction: Airy fairy forms of feeling

Like *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Tempest* is a marriage play rife with references to the moon. But while lunar influence's relationship to human fertility is in the latter play still a metonym for theological and political questions about the action of providence, the possibilities of usurpation, fraud, exception or irrelevance are more clearly and repeatedly raised. Moreover, the terrain of these possibilities of exception keeps shifting. The metaphor of the (affectively or menstrually) "unstanch'd wench" (1.1.48) that Gonzalo uses for the leaky ship that will be saved regardless imagines providence containing the threat sexually uncontrolled women represent to a patriarchal state. Sebastian and Antonio are said by Gonzalo to be willing to "lift the moon out of her sphere, if she would continue in it five weeks without changing" (2.1.180-182), an act of usurpation evoking either impossible boasts (if the moon's regular motion is stressed) or abortion (if the late moon tropes or causes late menstruation.) Later Antonio minimizes the agency of the man in the moon, as too slow a messenger to link Tunis and Italy; the powers of the moon as mediator are dismissed allowing a political usurpation (2.1.245ff). Stephano subsequently claims to contain the moon's power himself, claiming to be the man in the moon possessed of what Caliban calls "celestial liquor" (2.2.111; 131-2); the moon's power is (however fraudulently) potentially severable from its body. Moon-calf Caliban, the alleged child of a witch and a devil, almost succeeds in his plot despite his apparent birth-defects and suspicious origins; he then may be argued to reform, disowning the supposed corruptions of his origins. The near-miraculous magic of Sycorax can do what Stephano only boasts of, controlling (tidal or menstrual) "flows and ebbs," the moon's "command without her power" (5.1.270-1). Prospero's dimming of the sun and raising of the dead (5.1.41, 49) are by comparison difficult-to-legitimize miracles in a comparable register (also phrased as usurpations), which though not directly lunar envision a similar separability of (extreme) powers over human and astrological bodies.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸ Chris Laoutaris (94-154) identifies some of the lunar connections to human fertility in the play (see esp. 135-136), but argues for Prospero's colonial recreation of the island as a grotto-like wunderkammer meant

These uncertainties are more radical than the irregularities that, I argued, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* embedded in a broader theory of mixed temporality related to Hooker's understanding of natural law, framing failures of lunar influence as part of a broader cosmological and theological unpredictability. Given *The Tempest*'s linear time scheme and temporal leitmotif, *Midsummer*'s solution is not available anyway. But though repeatedly questioning the location of the power of the moon, the figure's ubiquity suggests that *The Tempest* does not share *Faustus*'s eagerness to imagine the universe as altogether lacking in meaningful cosmological structure. In this chapter I will argue that *The Tempest*'s theological cosmology is somewhere between Hooker's and Calvin's. In doing so the chapter assumes that the play's uncertainty about lunar influence marks its reception of the *Starry Messenger*; if the moon were mere matter like the earth, whence and wherefore its power, if any? One commonplace was that Galileo had drawn the moon down to earth with his telescope, rendering the question of lunar influence subject to the considerations of matter theory; my chapter on *The Duchess of Malfi* shows how this could produce a particularly extreme form of disenchantment, the rejection of occult influences and sympathies and the subtle confining of demonic and providential activity to the affective sphere. But in *The Tempest* magic is real, Ariel and other spirits are everywhere, and the discernment of providence in action and its rhetorical assertion are central to the play's politics.

The place of affect in each play's cosmology is one way to begin to understand this difference. If *The Duchess* tends to sever affect from both matter theory and politics, *The Tempest* tends to tentatively recombine them. Ariel's status as an "airy spirit" exploits early modern understandings of air as continuous with the medical spirits of the body and

to assert control over threatening parthenogenic nature. While attuned to the swampy fecundity of the island, Laoutaris reads Prospero as a very particular kind of courtly artist more interested in colonial and scientific enterprises than I would grant. My argument uses the play's political and theological thought, which Laoutaris generally ignores, to reframe these issues in a Galilean context, with very different conclusions.

by them the passions; Ariel literally materializes affect.¹⁵⁹ In this way, whereas *The Duchess*'s lunar investigations severed the misogynist link between the moon and the passions, *The Tempest* shifts the moon's supposed affective agency into the medium of astral influence, the air itself. The *Tempest*'s cosmological thinking therefore reincorporates affect into its very grounding. In doing so it participates in the convoluted displacement of ontological sympathy by affective sympathy.¹⁶⁰ Despite my opening catalogue of lunar imagery, Ariel's lability means that in the play as in my essay feeling itself and its political and theological mobilizations – rather than its ontological sources, for example in the moon – are the main focus of analysis. Yet the moon recurs, both in the play and in my argument, when questions of ontological grounding pop up.¹⁶¹

In *The Duchess* the Machiavellian manipulation of subjects' affect by princely displays of ceremony or power was essentially a dead-letter, given the pilgrims' cynical dumb-show commentary on the ceremony of Loretto; Ferdinand's attempts to drive the Duchess mad through the art of the wax-figure and the madmen masque are similar misfires (the wax-figure makes her sad, but only because she thinks it's Antonio's real body.) Affect remains useful in *The Duchess* as a moral counterbalance to Neostoic or Neoepicurean political theorizing, but is generally imprudent and inoperationalizable, easily conflatable with madness and pathology; the exception seems to be the religious feeling that offers vague possibilities of discerning providential warning signs (for example, Bosola and Antonio's fears and private visions of the Duchess). But in *The Tempest*, the materialization of affect and its manipulability through magic poses a problem for political theorizing which accepts feeling, and art in particular, as a token of political exchange. Is magic a form of political cheating, the provision of pleasurable illusions – or negatively, terrors¹⁶² – in the place of satisfying material needs, or in the

¹⁵⁹ This claim may evoke a tradition of allegorical readings of Ariel and Caliban. For air's relation to affect, see Paster *Humouring the Body* esp ch. 1; for a broader view leaning towards the pneumatic and spiritual, see Shirilan esp 16-20.

¹⁶⁰ For recent treatments of this process through literature see Lobis and Floyd-Wilson.

¹⁶¹ Mostly in sections 5 and 10.

¹⁶² See Greenblatt's stress on Prospero's manipulation of anxiety, "Martial Law in the Land of Cockaigne" (129-164).

place of providential signs of a directly divine origin? It poses even deeper problems for theological understandings of religious affect as a method of spiritual discernment, especially given Ariel's prior service to the witch Sycorax. Ariel's materialism belies the ontological distinction between devils and angels, but moral compasses thereby become harder to come by, since – if we accept the traditional distinctions between Prospero's white and Sycorax's dark conjuring – affect (or rather, Ariel) is manipulable by conjurors of either moral stripe.¹⁶³

In *The Tempest*, I argue, the play complicates but eventually resolves these problems by theorizing the political and theological roles of affect together. This theorization is in keeping with Victoria Kahn's study of 17th-century political contract theory (*Wayward Contracts*), in which aesthetic pleasure and affective sympathy become theorized as part of a political calculus modeled partly on covenant theology. In a world of contractual politics, politics becomes in some manner a matter of both consent and artifice, of the creation and dissolution of bonds of mutual obligation. *The Tempest* represents frequent arguments about political legitimacy and its loss conditioned on the success or failure of sovereigns to deliver on their obligations, but these obligations are only partly material and often affective or aesthetic (consider for example the role of Ariel's songs in shoring up Stephano's authority, or the function of Prospero's wedding masque). Moreover the dissolution and re-establishment of political bonds are usually accompanied by an argument not only about what sovereigns have failed to provide but also about God's providence as legitimizing a transfer of allegiance. These arguments about providence are often framed in the language of spiritual discernment, the distinction between the spiritual activity of God and the devil, but the presence in the play of morally neutral material spirits makes these methods more about distinguishing particular affective experiences. Feeling thereby becomes a locus of argument about the relationship between political and theological obligation.

¹⁶³ Prospero's moral ambiguity alone is sufficient for this argument; there is no need to polarize him and Sycorax, a movement her relegation to the backstory undercuts anyway.

The problem is that these terms as presented in the play exceed the capacity of traditional materialistic theorizing, particularly the Epicurean and Stoic ethics which, I argue, the play repeatedly considers, often in alignment with Epicurean and Stoic physics and associated secular versions of providential thought. It is not only that these classical systems have inadequate understandings of providence, but also that they are inconsistent with Christian arguments stressing the importance of religious affect, including in particular patience and suffering (eg Bouwsma, Strier). Prospero may demand suffering, but it is not clear that he is always justified in doing so; the extent to which he is has something to do with how closely we identify with his providential claims. Moreover Prospero's magic challenges the legitimacy of his political artifice by its very power; what does consent mean when faced with a conjurer who can manipulate feelings themselves? Readings of the play suspicious of Prospero treat his use of magical spectacle and theologically dubious providential claims as a Machiavellian use of civil religion – or in extreme form, the spectacle of executions averted by pardon at the last minute¹⁶⁴ – to enforce his power. Ariel's apparent materiality helps demystify Prospero's conjuring in support of this reading. But, I will argue, that there is a legitimating pattern of experience legible in Prospero's reconciled victims – among them Ferdinand, the boatswain, Stephano, Trinculo, and perhaps Caliban – modeled on Jesus's enigmatic claim to show the Pharisees the “sign of Jonah” (Mt. 12:24ff, 16-4; Lk. 11:29-32) to establish his theological *bona fides* against accusations of demonic conjuring. This pattern of experience – an imitation of Christ's kenosis, suffering, death, and resurrection – is a criterion of spiritual discernment that the play sets off against more explicitly materialistic and even aesthetic forms of discernment.

This pattern of experience moreover reflects David Evett's analysis of the play's theme of freedom within bondage, a Pauline characterization of the new covenant (eg. Gal. 4-5). I conclude by viewing the play's repeated representation of covenant- or contract-bending as a pattern for both politics and cosmology. Contracts in the play – like Ferdinand's subjugation to Prospero – can begin as feeling coercive and end up feeling

¹⁶⁴ Again, cp. Greenblatt's “Martial Law.”

free. Similarly Caliban's understanding of lunar influence can change over time, and indeed is a leitmotif of the play, and has a similar trajectory of dissolution. Conceiving of the universe as a covenantal order, though one subject to occasional miraculous violation as suggested by covenant theology, is, I suggest, the play's response to the Galilean observations' unsettling of the Hookerian cosmos of *Midsummer*. Yet unlike a Calvinist universe, a covenantal one maintains a voluntarism of both human and divine agents; the natural order may be violated quite dramatically, but the play's magic never directly affects the will. And even the violations of nature are limited in time and subject to a form of consent; they seem also to be a form of accommodation to the capacities of the parties in the covenant. Ferdinand and Miranda's marriage is the play's central model for such a contract between unequals, given their different erotic and worldly experiences, and the very limited claims the play makes on their offspring (compare *Midsummer's* more explicit claims in the blessing of the beds).¹⁶⁵ Prospero's rejection of magic and reincorporation of Caliban together signify a covenantal materialism which rejects essentialism – the reduction of human nature to matter or metaphysics – and makes its ethical claims at the level of the voluntary imagination. Despite the residual possibility of magical manipulation of affect, represented by Ariel's lingering presence in nature, in this way the play succeeds in severing ethics (and politics) from physics, when physics is understood as either rigid physical law or a reductionist attitude towards human materiality. Even Ariel's material spirit, or the substance of the air, I argue, must ultimately be constrained by a volitional economy of covenant that imbricates matter and grace.

Thus, my chapter title, "Influence, providence, and obligation," identifies three different languages for thinking about political and theological action in the world. Influence suggests an immanent power with a variable force; providence suggests an abstract order like predestination; and obligation suggests the ethical or economic language of duties and contracts, debts and reciprocation. The chapter highlights the slippage between these languages, their overlaps and inconsistencies, and the attempts to reconcile them

¹⁶⁵ cp. Kahn's analysis of the marriage contract as a paradigm (*Wayward*).

demanding by the ontological destabilizations of the lunar observations. The chapter begins at the philosophical beginning of the argument, the political fable of the ship at storm and Miranda's opening argument with Prospero, which attempt to build a new politics up from the basic principles of Epicurean and Stoic ethics – self-interest and universal concern – but are confounded by the residues of authority and paternity, Judeo-Christian particularist principles which identify themselves with the action of providence. The chapter will then describe how these theories are extended by a broader conception of affective bonds and obligations, in particular the challenge posed by the problem of suffering which can be handled conceptually by providential means but which immanently demands the discernment of spirits. Those who reject the suffering demanded of them, the play's rebels, demonstrate fantasies of autonomy, which nevertheless paradoxically end up requiring pleasurable aesthetic supplements which quickly turn into pain. The play's rebels theorize Stoic and Epicurean ethics together with Stoic and Epicurean physics, and this joint theorization is a major locus of the play's thinking about lunar influence. The second half of the chapter begins by addressing the possibility of the aesthetic discernment of spirits, suggesting that this problem, when considered through Jacobean demonology, serves as the play's conceptual link between political theology and Machiavellian civil religion, redeeming civil religion as a form of spiritual trial akin to demonism. The essay concludes with a description of the aesthetic and temporal constraints the play places on the artifice of civil religion through the covenantal theology it develops. In articulating the play's theory of covenantal materialism, I again return to the play's use of the moon and the biblical discourses involved in Galileo's lunar observations, particularly the story of Joshua at Gibeon and the scriptural elaborations of covenantal understandings of nature.

2 Self-interest, authority, and the common case

As everyone knows, *The Tempest* opens with a political fable. The storm-tossed ship is a scenario in which prudence and necessity rule, cooperative labour is mandatory, and outcomes – whether wreck or weathering – are shared by all. On the one hand, this common interest reconciles differences of political principle, for example the aporia between authority and self-interest. Gonzalo's attempt to motivate the sailors' labour by

love of king meets the Boatswain's rebuttal of self-love: (Gonzalo: "Good, yet remember whom thou hast aboard" / Boatswain: "None that I love more than myself" (1.1.19-20)).¹⁶⁶ Yet the obvious prudential reconciliation cannot conceal the strained class relations on board. This section will describe how the pressure of the storm serves to emphasize the rhetorical use of affect by the nobility, suggesting its demystification as a form of political control, while also suggesting the complexity of Gonzalo's use of providential claims. While the contrived situation of the ship in a storm lends itself to the boatswain's demystifications, the ship's immanent sinking forces a reconsideration of the premise of demystification itself, the elective affinity of the nobles for their own class. The dissolution of the "common case" of the ship forces a reconsideration of other forms of political and religious affinity.

While typically the fable allegorizes a polity as the ship's crew, the play's version of this fable has a twist, in that there are passengers who have no material role to play in the sailing; worse, they are nobles and courtiers, whose claims to authority are strained by the storm like the ship's cables. Nobility becomes an almost severable ideological superstructure, ready to snap off at the next gust of wind, along with the religious authority it claims for itself. Though the bonds holding it in place appear to be nominal, the nobles' verbal performances of authority constantly point beyond the mere assertion of that authority. Despite their apparent redundancy, the nobles insist on their ability to motivate the sailors by appealing to affective forms of unity or by mobilizing threats. Gonzalo's patronizing use of "Good" (short for "goodfellow" (Orgel 1.1.3n)) as a form of address is one relatively neutral rhetorical appeal; the boatswain and master use similar affective forms of address to motivate the sailors, for example, "cheerly my hearts!" (1.1.4) and "Cheerly, good hearts!" (1.1.27). But in their two visits to the decks, the nobles adopt more distinct strategies of motivation with the sailors' representative, the boatswain (not the master, to whom they are denied access): first honey, then vinegar, endearments followed by threats. Alonso feebly and condescendingly attempts to inspire the sailors to "play the men" (1.1.10) while Gonzalo

¹⁶⁶ All quotations from the play are from Orgel ed.

tells the boatswain to “remember whom thou hast aboard” (the king) (1.1.19); these appeals to the sailor’s pride and the king’s charisma and the consideration due to it are anticipated by the boatswain’s memorable question, “what cares these roarers for the name of king?” (1.1.17-18) and elaboration that Gonzalo’s authority as councillor cannot “command these elements to silence and work the peace of the present” (21-22). The boatswain’s materialist realism neuters the rhetorical appeals of the nobles – in his view, not only charisma, but their language itself is ineffective in controlling the natural and social world. When they return to the decks (significantly, without Alonso), Antonio and Sebastian insult the boatswain with religious accusations of incharity and blasphemy, the political accusation of insolence, and the compound absurdity that “we are less afraid to be de drowned than thou art” (1.1.43-44) mixing noble hauteur and religious pride. The boatswain responds with the simple ultimatum: “work you then” (1.1.42), threatening to refuse his labour in turn. His materialism again trumps the expanded religious register of their threats.

The failure of these affective motivational strategies to effect inter-class unity are marked by claims of linguistic unintelligibility. The boatswain compares the “roarers” of the storm to the verbal noise of the nobles, and calls their appeals “troubles” (1.1.18-19), and later invokes “a plague upon this [the nobles’] howling” which he calls louder than the storm or their office (1.1.35-36). Sebastian and Antonio on their return to the decks conversely accuse the Boatswain of “bawling” and “noisemak[ing]”; by the time of their second appearance, the latent hostility between these groups has devolved to mutual unintelligibility. Given this hostility brought out by the stress of necessity in the storm, when the case of the ship seems completely hopeless, the political bonds between classes simply sever. Both affective and prudential appeals appear to simply fall apart.

But in this decay there is a strange tension between active and passive forms of affinity. When the mariners go to prayers, Gonzalo suggests a royalist remove, advising the nobles “The King and Prince at prayers, let’s assist them, / For our case is as theirs” (53-4). But in what sense is this religious affiliation with royalism more valid than the boatswain’s prior accusation that they “assist the storm” by interfering with the sailors? Does the ambiguity of the word “assist,” meaning either participating or simply standing

by, suggest some correlation between the effects of prayer, the transcendent counterpart to working the ship's ropes (*pace* Luther), and some outcome of the case (to save the ship or their souls)? Can Gonzalo really choose a side so easily, and should he given Antonio and Sebastian's past and future sedition? A similar tension marks the hostility of Sebastian and Antonio, who claim to be "out of patience" with the sailors and that "we are merely cheated of our lives by drunkards" (55-56); restlessly Machiavellian, they refuse the sailors the right to determine what necessity demands, including giving up the case as lost. Gonzalo's prior counsel of "patience" (1.1.15) to the boatswain inverts the class burden of patience. The attribution of the right to determine necessity in Jacobean political theory could authorize either tyranny or rebellion and patience is its inverse. But patience is also, like prayer, a theological term which straddles active and passive acceptance of the suffering demanded by a higher power.

The theological registers of prayer and patience suggest that in some sense all is not lost, that the polity has not completely decayed. Gonzalo of course has earlier claimed that their case is, in the short term, still dependant on that of the boatswain. Gonzalo's figural logic conflates the material causes of the ship's ropes with both the political tool of the gallows and the secularized providence of fate and destiny:

I have great comfort form this fellow. Methinks he hath no drowning mark upon him – his complexion is perfect gallows. Stand fast, good Fate to his hanging, make the rope of his destiny our cable, for our own doth little advantage. If he be not born to be hanged, our case is miserable. (1.1.28-33)

Later when Antonio and Sebastian move their criticism of the boatswain into a religious register ("We are less afraid to be drowned than thou art" (1.1.44)), Gonzalo repeats:

I'll warrant him for drowning, though the ship were no stronger than a nutshell and as leaky as an unstanch'd wench. (1.1.46-8)

The first absurdly verbose exercise in verbal copia and the second pairing of rude and vivid figures, are attempts to literally (literarily) impose a providential legibility on the noise of the storm and the political argument. The shift in linguistic quality or aesthetic register matches the decline in feeling between the groups on the ship, but in both cases Gonzalo proposes a relationship that preserves authority by subordinating the king's

power to providence. Gonzalo provides no specific means for boat's salvation, unless that means is prayer; the boat will be saved for both the sake of punishing the boatswain and saving the body of the king, causes aligned through the preservation of the king's supposedly merely verbal authority.¹⁶⁷

But despite, or perhaps because of, Gonzalo's rhetorical flexibility, we should wonder whose case it is really. The boat contains three nobles Ariel as harpy later calls "men of sin" (3.3.54), including the king Gonzalo privileges. Providentially speaking, should all sink for their sake (as Prospero appears at first to intend)? Or should all be saved for the sake of the more sympathetic (to Prospero) Gonzalo, or the presumably crucial (to Prospero's plot) Ferdinand? Biblical storms provide both models – Jonah's voyage, in which the sailors refuse to be associated with the guilty prophet, and St. Paul's, in which the sailors survive for his sake, and are indeed urged to man their ropes as secondary causes. Echoes of Jonah and Paul's voyages peek through the later scenes, for example Prospero's assurance to Miranda that not a hair on their heads was harmed (1.2.30), a biblical trope for God's providential care which is also used by Paul on the ship, and Alonso's guilty wondering which (whale-like) "strange fish"¹⁶⁸ (2.1.110) has feasted on his son or the "fishing" (2.1.102) of lots (as on Jonah's ship) alluded to a few lines earlier.¹⁶⁹ As these examples suggest, discernment of providential action and its implications for political collectivities are as yet obscure in this scene – just as social relations or claims of fellowship or authority devolve into an aesthetic and affective unintelligibility. Both themes are developed later in the play and chapter.¹⁷⁰

The play's opening scene then proposes in detail a variety of forces shaping political collectivities: authority, self-interest, providence, necessity. Providence is obscure, authority is limited, necessity is debatable (and perhaps countered by patience), material

¹⁶⁷ Compare Prospero's similar paradox in his epilogue, discussed at the end of the chapter.

¹⁶⁸ cp. Garber 865 for the Geneva Bible's phrase "great fish" suggested here.

¹⁶⁹ Shakespeare may be thinking of several related philological problems. The Vulgate and Septuagint translated Jonah's destination Tarshish as Carthage, which Gonzalo links to Tunis. Tarsus, Paul's home town, was sometimes misidentified with Tarshish (eg. by Josephus).

¹⁷⁰ cp. Voltaire, *Candide: or Optimism* ch. 5

self-interest may be incoherent given Christian unworldliness.¹⁷¹ What appears in this scene to be the weakest political force, a mere verbal performance or finesse – the articulation of sympathy, love, or affection – becomes the main subject of the next scene. Its importance is already hinted at in the sailor's cries at the moment of the ship's apparent splitting, barely legible against the confusion of the stage directions:

A confused noise within

'Mercy on us!' – 'We split, we split!' – 'Farewell, my wife and children!' –
'Farewell, brother!' – 'We split! We split! We split!' (1.1.60-62)

The sailors' cries at the moment of the ship's splitting bely their claims to be driven by pure self-interest by appealing to affective bonds transcending the dissolution of the polity, even death. There is fear in these shouts, but also love. These panicked expressions of the primary affective bonds of familial love exceed the conventional expressions of "good fellowship" demystified by the preceding scene, and mark their dying concerns as less than purely selfish. In contrast, Antonio and Sebastian plan simply to "sink with the King" and "take leave of him" (1.1.63-4); their cool royalism trumps family bonds (Sebastian is Alonso's brother, but does not here call him that). The next scene transposes the political crisis of the ship into crises of families.

3 Affective obligation, love, and social sympathy

The dramatic pullback from the storm scene to Miranda watching it on land is an aestheticizing move which makes the audience confront its affective identifications and shifting sympathies. Regardless of which class we sympathize with inside the boat, outside the boat our perspective widens. The scene of the storm beheld from the safety of land recalls the famous opening to book 2 of Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura*, in which pleasure is derived from watching a ship in a storm because of the knowledge it gives of one's relative freedom from suffering; but the greatest pleasure, Lucretius goes on to say, is the mental sanctuary of the Epicurean knowledge that nature demands only the

¹⁷¹ cp. Stephano's "Every man shift for all the rest, and let no man take care for himself, for all is but fortune" (5.1.256-7), a morally edifying but (in its replacement of providence by fortune) religiously unacceptable statement.

absence of bodily pain and mental worry, from which perspective all other goals are revealed as mere wandering.¹⁷² Epicurean detachment and self-interest, like that claimed by the boatswain, initially appears to be at odds with the “compassion” or fellow-suffering Prospero soon praises in Miranda. Given the inadequacy of self-interest in conditions of extremity at the conclusion of the storm scene, this inversion is attractive. Yet in a different way both our sympathies and Miranda’s are being tested and will not remain universal.

For Miranda the conflict is not which side to take on the boat’s internal politics, but the problem of assessing her father’s morally ambiguous action in causing the storm. Her love for her “dearest father” (1.2.1) grounds her perplexity. Sensing an ambivalence in the natural processes of the storm she extrapolates generously to her father’s motivations:

If by your art, my dearest father, you have
Put the wild waters in this roar, allay them.
The sky, it seems, would pour down stinking pitch,
But that the sea, mounting to th’ welkin’s cheek,
Dashes the fire out. (1.2.1-5)

If the violence of the water is itself a mitigation of the violence of the lightning, Miranda wishes even more from her god-like father:

Had I been any god of power, I would
Have sunk the sea within the earth or ere
It should the good ship so have swallowed, and
The fraughting souls within her. (1.2.10-13)

In other words, recognizing the possible ambivalence in his action, Miranda projects this to extremes, demanding that his art move into the realm of the miraculously salvific, a Faustian cosmological distortion.

This desire for a miracle is grounded in her extension of sympathy to all in the boat, a sympathy which involves her passions without reserve based on the presumption of at least one creature worth saving:

¹⁷² Maisano (181-2) connects this moment to Prospero’s Epicurean achievement of tranquility through the investigation of nature. Lobis (1) also observes the Lucretian connection.

O, I have suffered
 With those that I saw suffer: a brave vessel –
 Who had, no doubt, some noble creature in her –
 Dashed all to pieces! O, the cry did knock
 Against my very heart – poor souls, they perished (1.1.5-9).

In these terms the “stinking pinch” recalls the fate of the biblical collectivity of Sodom, and Miranda’s pleas the negotiation of Abraham on their behalf (Gen. 18). The word “noble” is of course ambiguous and potentially ironized by our later knowledge of the Italian nobility, but though Ferdinand perhaps qualifies unambiguously, Miranda’s plea is naively generous. Inverting the way unintelligibility marks class hostility aboard the boat, in the absence of more information, Miranda defers to their blended cries – which become a single “cry” – and considers the “common case” to be that of all “creatures,” period. Like a more universalistic covenantal interpretation of Abraham, “in whom all the nations of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen 18:18), Miranda appears to found her plea for clemency also on a universal compassion, a universal basis of sympathy, a suffering with those seen (even from great distance) to suffer.

Prospero’s task is not to refute Miranda’s sympathy or compassion, but to invert its grounds from the universal to the particular, to reassert the primacy of the parental bond. His argument however has two partly incompatible vectors. First, and confusedly, Prospero denies that any harm has been done: “Be collected. / No more amazement. Tell your piteous heart / There’s no harm done” (1.2.13-14). He clarifies what appears to be a condescending instruction to self-delusion by suggesting that this harmlessness may be only relative to her own self-interest: “No harm. / I have done nothing but in care of thee, / Of thee, my dear one, thee, my daughter” (1.2.15-17). Though Prospero suggests a complexity in this self-interest by his hints of the backstory he is about to reveal, observing her ignorance of both herself and her father, this unspecified particularism is intolerable for Miranda, so Prospero must explain further that the harm she has seen is mere artifice or illusion, a mere appearance like the magic robe she helps him remove while he explains:

The direful spectacle of the wreck, which touched
 The very virtue of compassion in thee,
 I have with such provision in mine art

So safely ordered that there is no soul
 No, not so much perdition as an hair
 Betid to any creature in the vessel
 Which thou heard'st cry, which thou saw'st sink. (1.2.26-32)

Acting like the Epicurean revelation of the ways of nature in order to provide consolation, this is a redefinition of harm through the demystification of an illusion, along with a promise to rationalize the illusion with the rest of his story. But unlike Epicurean or Stoic consolations, which redefine subjective experience without denying objective realities, this is a providential argument that no *objective* harm has occurred. While refraining from Miranda's demand for a cosmological miracle, Prospero redefines apparent reality as a spectacle, in the process insisting that the "virtue of compassion" can be generated from illusion, from mere "spectacle," and that aesthetic distance may be socially beneficial rather than deadening.¹⁷³ Aesthetic distance is here identified with the process of readjusting sympathies.¹⁷⁴

There is a strong asymmetry in this accounting of material harm and feelings. Prospero's explanation, while resolving some of Miranda's concerns, does not address the problem of the subjective experience of suffering for the people on the ship, which I will discuss more deeply in the next section. Some feelings, he seems to suggest, can be discounted against others (for example, Miranda's compassion against the sailors' fear). But the experience of suffering aside, Prospero's providence (or "provision") has near-miraculously evaded the problem of competing affective bonds troubling Miranda. Given the Abrahamic echoes of the scene, we might recall the binding of Isaac (Gen. 22) which is similarly resolved; the competing affective obligations to God and Isaac marked by

¹⁷³ Kahn (*Wayward* 249-50) observes the frequent use of the Lucretian storm as a metaphor for art, and describes the similar aestheticization of tragic events, which we would avoid in life, into something productive of socially beneficial compassion. Here the moment is highly metatheatrical, putting to the question the effect of theatre on spectators who with Miranda may now feel a productive compassion for the crew on the ship, though they are also aware of the illusion. The theatrical setting strengthens Prospero's argument.

¹⁷⁴ But cp. Heather James ("Dido's Ear"), who stresses Miranda's conflicting sympathies as a model for testing Renaissance anxieties about theatrical contagion which undermined theories of socially-reaffirming tragic catharsis. Just as Dido's listening to Aeneas's tale of Troy lead to a similar destruction of her own city, Miranda's sympathy threatens to import conflict into her island.

Abraham's response of "Here I am" to both is resolved by his trust that God will "provide" a ram to be sacrificed (Gen. 22:8), a verse glossed in the Geneva Bible as marking trust in God's providence. Luther argued that Abraham had knowledge of the new covenant, thereby understanding that grace made no real sacrifice necessary (Jackson *Shakespeare and Abraham*, Ch.1). But even Genesis itself frames the binding by the Abrahamic covenant whose terms imply that Isaac will not die. Because of this covenant, the binding ends up as a mere spectacle; Isaac's faith in Abraham mirrors Abraham's faith in the paternalistic deity that both will fulfill their obligations. But in most cases the subjective experience of those tested in this way is not so easily resolved. Even if no material harm results, Prospero's redefinition of harm to exclude the affective experience of suffering is a faith-testing move.

A similar aesthetic distance is reattained later in the play, in act 4 after Prospero's masque dissolves and he gives his revels speech; but for the rest of this scene, the aesthetic distancing of the perspective of Prospero's "provision" and the accompanying providential reconciliation of competing interests is unavailable. These interests are never marked as individualistic self-interest but are always under the tension of love or other forms of sympathy, turning them into particular kinds of obligations; in each situation harm and suffering seem real, and the universal and particular come into conflict. Indeed, the rest of the scene can be thought of as an exploration of the origins and etiologies of affective obligation, beginning with the bond between parent and child and generalizing outward. In the process, Prospero becomes less of a controlling agent and more of a negotiating one. As the example of familial love would suggest, feeling itself becomes a term in the negotiations, a token that can be weighed against material obligations.

Despite its primacy as model for particularist compassion, in the play the parental bond is not an automatic or essentialized one. Rather, as the Abrahamic echoes of the play (or even Miranda's perplexity) should suggest, it is partly volitional. While the term

sympathy contains in its philosophical origins an assumption of common substance,¹⁷⁵ making the material relation of family a likely basis for it, the play does its best to make material inheritance an unreliable ground of sympathy. This is one way it begins to sever ethics from physics. Gonzalo's "warrant" that the boatswain will drown "though the ship were no stronger than a nutshell and as leaky as an unstanch'd wench" (1.1.44-5) is a misogynist indictment of the kind of promiscuous compassion Miranda demonstrates that in contrast aligns a Stoic stoniness with the necessity for patriarchal discipline controlling women's easily contaminated bodies.¹⁷⁶ However Prospero and Miranda's discussion of family life makes room for feeling at the same time that it defends women and their wombs. "Thy mother was a piece of virtue, and / She said thou wast my daughter" (1.2.57-8) says Prospero, acknowledging that paternity is a relation that is always less than completely materially certain, and dependent on female virtue. Miranda conversely excuses her grandmother for her uncle's sins by observing that "good wombs have borne bad sons" (1.2.119).

The culmination of this denial of the material transmission of vice or virtue, sin or innocence, or in more general terms, moral sympathy, is the story of Caliban's origin; as Prospero explains, Sycorax was spared by the Algerians because the moral bond between herself and Caliban, unborn in her womb, is assumed by law to be null, or at least not incriminating. Caliban's alleged paternity by the devil, what one might call his spiritual rather than material origin, is not yet invoked here. By contrast Prospero's virtual maternity of Miranda is enchanted and spirited, a source of strength outweighing all suffering. Hearing of their being set to sea, Miranda worries of the "trouble" she was to Prospero, but he counters:

O, a cherubin
Thou wast that did preserve me. Thou didst smile,
Infused with a fortitude from heaven,
When I have decked the sea with drops full salt,

¹⁷⁵ I owe this observation to public lectures by Seyward Goodhand (Canadian Society for Renaissance Studies, Ottawa, 2015) and Brian Cummings (Canada Milton Seminar, Toronto, 2015).

¹⁷⁶ cp. Chapter 2.

Under my burden groaned, which raised in me
 An undergoing stomach to bear up
 Against what should ensue (1.2.154-157)

As has often been noted, Prospero here uses language (“under my burden groaned”) evocative of pregnancy; the emotional weight of parenthood, not material maternity, is what matters here.

As Prospero’s example makes especially clear, while acknowledging the morally immaterial nature of parenthood, these two sets of parents set adrift in boats with their children also provide further examples of the providential collectivities of the ship at sea in the prior scene. Prospero will later, through Ariel, accuse Antonio, Alonso, and Sebastian of risking his “innocent child” (3.3.72) at sea – implicitly himself adopting the position of a Jonah who puts his shipmates in danger. But in this scene both infant or unborn passengers, Caliban and Miranda, are credited with saving their parents; they are more like Paul on his voyage. The difference between them is in the agency of justice involved: Sycorax is abandoned on the island by sailors out of practical necessity, but Prospero perceives in Miranda’s smile the infusion of heavenly fortitude – a figure for the motivation his daughter provided him – marking the “providence divine” (1.2.159) that brought them ashore. Prospero’s intense love for his daughter is an affective experience he marks as a spiritual sign and fortification, the vision of an angel.

This double return to the image of the ship, this time centred on literal and figural wombs, both presents the family as the origin of a providential politics and expands the sphere of argument beyond the family. In one sense this argument seems to be aware of the Stoic concept of *oikeiosis*, the gradual development of a sense of rational cosmopolitan obligation from its beginnings in self love, expanding to love of children, and growing through rationality to an understanding of a natural universal obligation.¹⁷⁷ Parents, like Prospero, suffer for their children and consider it worthwhile, going so far as to disclaim their own agency in suffering. Or, like Sycorax and Caliban, the moral link between parent and child may be much less noble. But Prospero’s arguments with Ariel

¹⁷⁷ See Pembroke for a discussion of *oikeiosis*.

and Caliban broaden the problem of affective obligation beyond the arena of the family. Like the relationship between parents and children, these relationships change with time, and are sometimes modelled on familial ones. These arguments test the duration, limits, and rationale for these bonds. Caliban's trajectory is from apparently loving adoption (perhaps exploitation) to threatened enslavement; Ariel's is from debt to emancipation, from pain to love.¹⁷⁸ I will say more at the end of the chapter about the agreements or contracts made between Ariel, Caliban, and Prospero, and return also to theological covenants, Abrahamic or otherwise, but it is enough here to say that the sheer variety of models for affective obligations presented in this scene, and the dynamics of their transformations over time, exceeds the capacity of both Stoic *oikeiosis* and the Epicurean self-love considered in the opening scenes.

In the remainder of this section I want to consider two limit cases of affective obligation tied up with Miranda's marriage. First, I want to consider the relationship between Prospero and Miranda from the perspective of its possible termination after her marriage. The occasional translation of *oikeiosis* as appropriation, a term linked by Grotius to property rights (Brooke ch. 2), is helpful for considering how this and other relationships can change over time. Prospero's plan to marry Miranda to Ferdinand is sometimes seen to be a manipulative and instrumental use of his daughter for his own political ends. Is Prospero's care for his daughter in this sense merely a self-interested appropriation for the sake of later alienation, treating her as a commodity? Second, I will consider the case

¹⁷⁸ The "pains" of education and nurture Prospero claims to have "humanely taken" (4.1.189-90) on Caliban seem to devolve into the sheer need for his service; despite the spirits' power, I am inclined from early modern beliefs about witches and fairies (and the vanishing of the harpy banquet in the play) to believe Prospero's spirits cannot provide material labour or food in the play and that Prospero is being honest when he tells Miranda that "as 'tis / We cannot miss him. He does make our fire, / Fetch in our wood, and serves in offices / That profit us" (1.2.310-313). His initial incorporation into the family-polity based on love devolves into one based on necessity. Retrospectively Caliban feels manipulated - cp. his discussion of Prospero's stroking. But I am also inclined to read Prospero's claim that nurture cannot stick on Caliban's nature and that his father is the devil to be exasperated hyperbole, the expression of his sense of betrayal; Caliban does seem to learn to "seek for grace" (5.1.295) at the end of the play (the ambivalence of this term will be explored later). Ariel's history in contrast is from debt to emancipation; the issues at stake are the experience of suffering Prospero relieved Ariel from and the promised length of servitude necessary to pay back the debt. If Ariel argues, he also comes to love and be loved; the relationship changes from one grounded on pain to one grounded on love, even extending past the term agreed upon.

of Ferdinand as a special problem for affective theories of political obligation: how and why should anybody involved tolerate Miranda's marriage to the son of Prospero's inveterate enemy?¹⁷⁹

First, Miranda. For comparison's sake, the more obvious instrumental alienations of the play take place in the other counter-polity presented most fully in the play, that of Caliban, Trinculo, and Stephano. Trinculo at first interprets the cowering Caliban as mere fish or monster to be appropriated and sold for profit:

What have we here – a man or a fish? – Dead or alive? A fish, he smells like a fish; a very ancient and fish-like smell; a kind of not-of-th-newest poor-John. A strange fish! Were I in England now, as once I was and had but this fish painted, not a holiday-fool there but would give a piece of silver. There would this monster make a man – any strange beast there makes a man. When they will not give a doit to relieve a lame beggar, they will lay out ten to see a dead Indian. (2.2.24-32)

The moral distinctions Trinculo makes between human and animal, dead and alive, and his criticism of the English for their preference for titillation by the exotic over fellow-feeling all force him – in a repetition of the reconfigurations of sympathy after the pullback from the storm, but predicated on proximity, not distance – to revise his attitude to Caliban once he appears to be both alive and human:

Legged like a man, and his fins like arms! Warm, o'my troth! I do now let loose my opinion, hold it no longer: this is no fish, but an islander, that hath lately suffered by a thunderbolt. (*Thunder*) Alas, the storm is come again! My best way is to creep under his gaberdine – there is no other shelter hereabout. Misery acquaints a man with strange bedfellows. I will here shroud till the dregs of the storm be past. (2.2.32-4)

Trinculo's temporary fellowship with Caliban is partly self-serving, motivated by the same arguments for necessity used by the boatswain and Stephano's eventual call for unity among those subject to fortune in the last scene of the play. But it is also very different from the long-term exploitation subsequently planned by Stephano. The particular bond between Stephano and Trinculo initially appears stronger than the generic

¹⁷⁹ A purely self-interested political theory of course has no problem with political marriages. But Prospero wants a love-match.

bond between Trinculo and Caliban, though the comedy of Trinculo speaking from under Caliban's gaberdine with "two voices" expresses yet again the ambivalence of spheres of sympathy being readjusted and negotiated.¹⁸⁰ When Stephano and Trinculo encounter each other they claim to be overjoyed, call each other friends, and at least Trinculo is relieved to find someone of the same city: "O, Stephano, two Neapolitans scaped!" (2.2.109). Belonging to the same city, or even speaking the same language, can be grounds of sympathy, this scene suggests. Stephano noticing Caliban's fluent (virtual) Italian claims as much: "Where the devil should he learn our language? I will give him some relief, if it be but for that" (2.2.65). But despite this bond of sympathy, Stephano's immediate plan is to appropriate Caliban as a possession for the sake of profitable alienation: "If I can recover him, and keep him tame, and get to Naples with him, he's a present for any emperor that ever trod on neat's leather" (2.2.66-68). Later when the balance of interests changes, Stephano instead comes close to alienating Trinculo for the sake of Caliban.

Stephano's instrumental alienations differ in important ways from both the emancipation of Ariel and the eventual marriage of Miranda. If Stephano's instrumental alienations can be a negative consequence of rational cosmopolitanism deriving from natural affect, this is also one available interpretation of the marriage trade in women, but as Barbara Ann Sebek has argued on quite different grounds, this is not quite what is going on with Miranda.¹⁸¹ Prospero's description of Miranda to Ferdinand, even as he calls her a "compensation" for Ferdinand's trials, as "a third of mine own life, / Or that for which I live" (4.1.3-4), seems, in its arbitrary quantification, to bely commodification (and suggest distinctions of metaphysical categories like teleology rather than material substantives or economic quantifications). Miranda's agency also belies the objectification, as Sebek has observed. The play also provides at least two comparators

¹⁸⁰ Stephano's fears of demonism are significant, as I will discuss in the next section.

¹⁸¹ Sebek describes a complicated relationship between profit and pleasure in a commodity economy that needs to preserve class distinctions especially in marriage relations; the experience of pleasure in labour becomes a class marker, and Miranda resists being instrumentalized as an object of exchange by herself pleasurably labouring.

— the very different aesthetic and emotional valences of the conspirators’ appropriation of Caliban for profit and the contentious and presumably politically motivated marriage of Claribel to Tunis. If the play does the work of patriarchal ideology by making Miranda’s marriage alienation seem legitimate, it does so by partly exposing and then relativizing the ideology’s manifestations.¹⁸²

In particular, the variety of conceptions of alienation here are a striking contrast to Titania’s recollection of her pregnant votaress in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and her argument with Oberon about the value of the Indian boy. In *The Tempest* the metaphor comparing a ship carrying goods to a pregnant woman is extended and revised, and a variety of relationships can stand in for maternity – including paternity, adoption, debt, and friendship – and alienation can be justified and qualified through forms of accounting more subtle than that of commodity exchange. Even Prospero’s brother, Antonio, can become a figural child, whose trust, ending up as a form of alienation, fails to find fitting reciprocation. Prospero’s “trust, / Like a good parent, did beget of him / A falsehood in its contrary as great / As my trust was, which had, indeed, no limit, / A confidence sans bound” (1.2.93ff). The idea that Antonio’s apparent freedom was still within a relation of obligation (though he rejected it) will be returned to near the end of the chapter.

Antonio however offers an even subtler and more cynical perspective on alienation than Stephano. For him, the procedure of appropriation and alienation can be contextually useful not for the sake of exchanging people as commodities, but instead as a politically expedient manipulation of affect. In the ship at storm, according to the boatswain, only self-interest is required for cooperation. In Milan, according to Prospero, Antonio’s mastery of the instrumental manipulation of factional politics through affective appropriation and alienation, similar to Stephano’s later juggling of Trinculo and Caliban’s rivalry (or Caliban’s manipulation of Stephano and Trinculo’s friendship), is sufficient to take over the apparatus of state:

¹⁸² I will argue that this is the case with its other ideological effects, in particular its political theology.

Being once perfected how to grant suits,
 How to deny them, who t'advance, and who
 To trash for overtopping, new created
 The creatures that were mine, I say: or changed 'em,
 Or else new formed 'em; having both the key
 Of officer and office, set all hearts I'th' state
 To what tune pleased his ear, that now he was
 The ivy which had hid my princely trunk,
 And sucked my verdure out on't – (1.2.79-87)

Manipulating the “hearts” of the child-like “creatures” of the state apparatus by strategically rewarding and punishing, moving them closer to and further from the centre of “power” and “revenue” he has claimed from Prospero (98-99), Antonio even convinces himself that he is the duke, rather than merely “th’ outward face of royalty” (104).

Despite the parasitical process of the ivy Prospero envisions, even here he reserves to himself two inward and apparently inalienable *sine qua nons* of royalty. The first is popular love. Though the roarers in the storm scene care not for the name of king, Prospero insists that his “people” still “loved” (141) him enough to require deception by Antonio to depose him. And even the winds themselves that bore them to the island did so reluctantly:

There they hoist us
 To cry to th’ sea that roared to us, to sigh
 To th’ winds, whose pity, sighing back again,
 Did us but loving wrong. (1.2.148-151)

The phrase “loving wrong,” evoking the corrective chastisements of a parent, is like the infant Miranda’s “smile, / infused with a fortitude from heaven” (1.2.153-4) that follows, a retrospective assertion of providential confidence (some would say hubris) marked as a greater and generalized affective debt, like the love of his people, circumscribing Antonio’s local factional manipulations.¹⁸³

¹⁸³ Prospero’s epilogue fuses the loving wrong of piteous winds and the love of his subjects in its request for the audience’s “gentle breath” to fill his sails. I will return to this point at the end of the chapter.

Yet on the underpopulated island providential claims and popularity are both unavailable to underwrite his authority, and Prospero negotiates on the simpler grounds of private obligation with Miranda, Caliban, and Ariel. The appearance of Ferdinand is a special challenge, since there is no obvious grounds for any sympathy between him and Prospero. At best Ferdinand could be considered a neutral third party; at worst, Ferdinand is the son of Prospero's enemy and might be tainted by his guilt, though the severability of parents' and children's moral responsibility the scene raises complicates this assumption. Prospero's manipulation of both Ferdinand and Miranda by purposely concealing the artifice of the political marriage he intends is designed to test each of them on separate terms. The tests are also meant to have their own effects, the creation of appropriate feelings – love in other words – that will confirm the marriage, elevating it beyond artifice; these I discuss in the next section.

Miranda's trust in her father and the limits of her compassion are both tested. Ferdinand reveals his identity as the Neapolitan prince before he is confined by Prospero, but Miranda continues to plead his case with full knowledge of his status as an enemy. The Neapolitan status as "inveterate" (1.2.122) enemy, it is true, is different from the treason of Antonio, and therefore may be more easily overcome by a political marriage. But Prospero has further charged Ferdinand with treason, casting him in Antonio's mold. While Prospero begins the scene by trying to soothe Miranda's conflicting emotions, he ends the scene by trying to increase the conflict. The presentation of Ferdinand as someone who has suffered in the wreck and with grief for his lost fellows activates the compassion the storm has already elicited, dominating any desire Miranda might form for revenge upon revelation of his identity; Prospero's accusation of him as a traitor constructs a different potential conflict, between her duty to her father and her compassion for Ferdinand. This conflict is detectable in one of the play's key words, gentle – "Why speaks my father so ungently?" (1.2.445) asks Miranda, begging Prospero to show pity; then when she calls Ferdinand "gentle and not fearful" (1.2.469), warning Prospero not to push him too hard, she elicits Prospero's most authoritarian moment as a parent: "What? I say, / My foot my tutor?" (1.2.469-70). Prospero is in effect forcing Miranda to disobey him, and forcing her to feel the pain of this disobedience. This emotional manipulation is the beginning of the partial alienation he intends, yet it

conceals no unpleasant facts of Ferdinand's identity or history from her. Nor does Miranda reject Prospero - here or ever - even making her apologies to Ferdinand for him at the end of the scene: "My father's of a better nature, sir, / Then he appears by speech. This is unwonted / Which now came from him" (1.2.496-9). Prospero's unusual aggression does not overcome her trust in his better nature.

Prospero's infliction of suffering is partly inexplicable to Miranda, but is even more so for Ferdinand. Before Ferdinand is tested, however, he receives a musical consolation from Ariel's "full fathom five" song. This musical consolation is an aesthetic one that operates in a materialist register; Ariel's transformation into a sea nymph, though invisible, is presumably to give him sympathetic power over the waters "fury" and Ferdinand's "passion" through his song's "sweet air" (1.2.393-4), another displacement of lunar influence over liquids and humours by the airy spirit. Reduplicating the materialist register of Ariel's efficacy, the song of Alonso's sea change into "something rich and strange" replaces the spiritual consolations of afterlives with the fiction of a resurrection into an aesthetic artifact. This consolation functions similarly to but inversely from Prospero's consolation of Miranda watching the storm; Miranda is consoled by demystification and an explicit rational promise, Ferdinand by aesthetic mystification itself which operates through Ariel's interstitial agency. After this calming, however, Prospero again creates another conflict. His strategy for incorporating Ferdinand into his polity is by "trial" (1.2.468) (Miranda's word), the endurance of suffering with no clear purpose or justification. Ferdinand's punishment is manifestly unjust – he is falsely accused of a usurpation he seems to have no intention of committing; he is not responsible for the sins of his father, as the play has stressed in its treatment of families; unlike Caliban, he is only a potential rapist of Miranda; unlike Ariel, he has no rational debt to Prospero for having saved him from the storm, since he does not know that Prospero has done so and Prospero caused the storm in the first place anyway.

Ferdinand's trial then moves a politics based on affective obligation into the territory suggested by Miranda's wish for a miracle to save the frightened passengers on the ship in the storm. This is the territory of theodicy, the justification of inexplicable suffering,

the excess pain which political obligations may not explain or satisfy (or, from a different perspective, political demands made without justification or recompense). Suffering is in general a more difficult form of political excess than love, but Prospero seems to think it produces stronger bonds (1.2.451). Yet for both Ferdinand and Miranda, the excess cruelty of her father is for simplicity's sake confined to the single narrow sphere of their love for one another; this is the effect and purpose of Prospero's prior consolations of both of them. Rather than the wide objective angle of the storm, Ferdinand and Miranda confront the narrow, partly subjective field of each other. But Prospero's pat providential answer to Miranda is not available to Ferdinand or to any of the other characters in the play, who must discern the purpose of their suffering through other means.

4 Patience, providence, and the discernment of spirits

4.1 Ferdinand's paradigm

Ferdinand's "trial" is the idealized model for the other forms of suffering demanded in the play. Far from accepting it, initially Ferdinand resists imprisonment as a matter of prudence ("I will resist such entertainment till / Mine enemy has more power" (1.2.466-67)); when he is charmed and prevented from striking with his sword, Miranda reads his forbearance as temporary, predicting that his nobility will make him fight back: "Make not too rash a trial of him," she warns Prospero, "for he's gentle, and not fearful" (1.2.468-9). But Ferdinand comes to embrace his suffering despite his nobility.

Ferdinand's suffering is much simpler than that of other characters in the play for several reasons, including his supposed independence from competing interests as a "single thing" (1.2.432), the presence of a clear consolation in sight (Miranda), and a clearly irresistible power that demands it (Prospero). His suffering however can be characterized neither as an instrumental or temporary self-denial, nor a form of retribution, nor the tit-for-tat of a contractual exchange. For one, he is, as far as he knows, unjustly accused. Moreover his material task – moving thousands of logs before nightfall – is at once impossible, incommensurable with any crime, and not conditioned on receiving any reward; certainly not the reward he wants, Miranda. It is only later that Prospero later calls her a "compensation" (4.1.2), undercutting the idea of exchange in the same speech

by calling her a “gift” (4.1.8); and there is never any such agreement that we are aware of made beforehand.

To summarize, while Ferdinand’s trial has all the ingredients of a Christian trial, a suffering which is in itself spiritually beneficial and transformative, rather than punitive or instrumental, his confidence in this trial comes from the dramatic artifice of too easy a discernment of spiritual consolations in the person of Miranda. From the beginning Ferdinand and Miranda see each other *as if* they were themselves spirited beings of an unambiguously good kind. Though wrapped in poetic conventions, this language next to the situation’s establishment by the airy spirit Ariel is so pervasive as to be more than trope. As Miranda exclaims, “What is’t? – A spirit? / Lord, how it looks about! Believe me, sir, / It carries a brave form. But ’tis a spirit” (1.2.410-413). Prospero’s qualifications of Ferdinand’s humanity aside, Miranda insists, “I might call him / A thing divine, for nothing natural / I ever saw so noble” (1.2.418-419). And when Prospero insists on Ferdinand’s treason, Miranda backs up Ferdinand’s identification of his humanity with his innocence by asserting his spiritual purity:

Ferdinand: No, as I am a man!

Miranda: There’s nothing ill can dwell in such a temple.
If the ill spirit have so fair a house,
Good things will strive to dwell with’t. (1.2.456-9)

Miranda’s language of the body as temple evokes the Christian view of the body as the temple for the Holy Spirit, which she sees as a trustworthy competitor even in the case of possession by an “ill spirit” or demon.¹⁸⁴ Miranda’s defence of Ferdinand introduces into the play the problem of “discernment of spirits,” telling angels from devils who could disguise themselves as “angels of light” (2 Cor. 11:14), and the corresponding but obscure schism of the world into agents (human and angelic) of God and the devil, those inspired by the Holy Spirit and those merely possessed by or co-operating with

¹⁸⁴ cp. Jennifer Waldron’s *Reformations of the Body* for the Protestant resacralization of the body as the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.

demons.¹⁸⁵ Prospero could earlier call Miranda a “cherubin” (1.2.152) that preserved him and was blameless for his suffering; Miranda conducts a similar defence of Ferdinand.

But the precise metaphysics are less important than the relativistic, materialist, and phenomenological terms used in Prospero’s rebuttals. In directing her attention to Ferdinand, Prospero stresses the senses’ role as a fully intentional and rationally interpretable means of perception: “The fringed curtans of thine eye advance, / And say what thou sees yond” (1.2.408-9). Vision is perhaps singled out here given the more active role of Ariel’s music and “sweet air” allaying the waters and Ferdinand’s passion a few lines earlier, but Prospero expands his discussion to the senses as a whole. As a lesson in the ways of looking, Prospero corrects Miranda’s claim that Ferdinand is a spirit by insisting on his materiality:

No, wench, it eats and sleeps, and hath such senses
As we have – such. This gallant which thou sees
Was in the wreck, and but he’s something stained
With grief – that’s beauty’s canker – thou mightiest call him
A goodly person. (1.2.413-17)

Prospero defines Ferdinand’s humanity not only by his bodily needs – eating and sleeping – but by his embodied forms of knowing – his senses – and feeling – his grief. Prospero’s “such” hints that both Ferdinand and Miranda may be subjectively misled by their senses and emotions, just as grief objectively disfigures Ferdinand’s beauty. When Ferdinand’s humanity is established, Prospero yet again instructs Miranda in visual judgement:

What
An advocate for an impostor? Hush!
Thou think’st there is no more such shapes as he,
Having seen but him and Caliban. Foolish wench,
To th’ most of men this is a Caliban,
And they to him are angels. (477-482)

¹⁸⁵ The recent literature on this topic is substantial. See eg. Cameron; Clark, *Thinking with Demons*; Sluhovsky; Sangha; Copeland and Machielson; Schreiner.

Though he earlier granted his beauty, Prospero here rejects his visual appeal as the product of Miranda's naiveté. Caliban, the "villain" who Miranda hated to look on (309), takes the relative position of devil, and other men angels, beautiful and good. But it is only a relative position – Prospero doesn't actually call Caliban a devil here. While claiming that vision is not a trustworthy judge of virtue, Prospero's language fails to reject it entirely, preferring instead to relativise. This is an important qualification of the problem of discernment of spirits, avoiding the radical conclusion that that devils can indeed disguise themselves perfectly as angels of light, that the evil can appear as the good, instead suggesting that finer distinctions may be available. Indeed since the discernment of spirits is also the discernment of spiritual experiences, the transition from the distinction between the metaphysical beings of angels and demons to the discernment of human beings' spiritual qualities suggests a further turn into experiential discernment, the study of inward feelings and dispositions. As Stuart Clark has observed in his study of early modern visual skepticism, theorists of spiritual discernment repeatedly urged the adoption of non-visual criteria (*Vanities* 222ff). Whether the play believes aesthetic distinctions, or some combination of sensory judgement, affect, and introspection, can reliably be used for spiritual discernment is a question I will return to later.

Just as Miranda initially thinks Ferdinand is a spirit but then accepts that he is a man, adhering to him nonetheless, Ferdinand similarly progresses in the scene from wondering whether Miranda is a goddess to wondering whether she's available. The language of the scene encodes this relativistic logic in its initial pun on maid:

Ferdinand: Most sure the goddess.
 On whom these airs attend. Vouchsafe my prayer
 May know if you remain upon this island,
 And that you will some good instruction give
 How I may bear me here. My prime request,
 Which I do last pronounce, is – O you wonder! –
 If you be maid or no?
 Miranda: No wonder, sir,
 But certainly a maid. (1.2.422-8)

The humour of this scene allows Ferdinand's quotation of the *Aeneid* (Orgel ed. 124 n.422) to be taken seriously, with Miranda coyly deflating his sense of the supernatural,

reading, like a suspicious audience might, his word “maid” as a disputation of her chastity. Later Ferdinand repeats the question, using the word “virgin” (448) to clarify. Audiences are initially partly in the position of Miranda and Ferdinand encountering each other, but also have the privilege of knowing what a real spirit – Ariel – looks like, and are possibly primed to adopt Ariel’s suspicious categorization of Ferdinand as a “strutting chanticler” (387), echoed by Prospero’s characterization of him as a “gallant” (1.2.414). The impropriety of Ferdinand asking about Miranda’s virginity in front of her father is also a problem. Audiences also can catch the pun on “wonder,” Miranda’s name - which here eludes Ferdinand but may inform Miranda response.

I want to suggest more generally that this moment of wordplay extends the problem of discernment of spirits from the phenomenology of the senses to the verbal domain. Verbal unintelligibility marked class difference in the storm scene and its collapse into a single cry marked the reconfiguration of sympathy at the beginning of the scene. Here wordplay’s more subtle exploration of intelligibility marks the problem of Ferdinand’s ambiguous feelings and intentions. The trajectory from Ferdinand’s allusion to Virgil to the pun on maid moves from literary patterns of experience associated with patriarchal and cultural orthodoxy to more contingent and flexible verbal loci of erotic experience; moreover the pun in Miranda’s name and wonder, an emotion associated with the preternatural,¹⁸⁶ suggests the recalibration of the boundary between the natural and supernatural. This verbal exchange therefore marks his reconfiguration of affective obligations as a test case for spiritual discernment.¹⁸⁷

But Ferdinand and Miranda are in general less privileged than either Prospero or the audience – hence Miranda’s trust in Ferdinand is all the more remarkable, as is Ferdinand’s sudden willingness to endure an imprisonment he characterizes as a spiritual holiday. Acknowledging Prospero’s paralysis of his “nerves,” Ferdinand declaims:

¹⁸⁶ cp. Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park, *Wonder and the Order of Nature*.

¹⁸⁷ The trajectory from vision to language is important given the argument of the thesis as a whole, or Clark (*Vanities*) and Tuck’s framing of the 17th-c epistemic shift from vision to language. It is also important given the chapter’s description of covenantal materialism, given the verbal nature of covenants.

My spirits, as in a dream, are all bound up.
 My father's loss, the weakness which I feel,
 The wreck of all my friends, nor this man's threats,
 To whom I am subdued, are but light to me,
 Might I but through my prison once a day
 Behold this maid. All corners else o' the earth
 Let liberty make use of – space enough
 Have I in such prison. (1.2.488-494)

Ferdinand's "prison" is paradoxically a spiritual freedom, phrased initially in the material language of the medical spirits, but extending to a loss of all external cares, transcending the body within which he exists, its frailties, and its prior commitments. By invoking a dream-like state, it sounds very much like a form of anaesthesia, a point I will return to soon. Miranda offers comfort by promising that her father is "of a better nature" (1.2.497) than he appears, but this is not the source of Ferdinand's comfort, which is Miranda herself. The scene juxtaposes Miranda's comfort to Ferdinand with Prospero's reiterated promises of freedom to Ariel in asides (1.2.495-501); though Ferdinand is simply imprisoned with no promise of release, he feels as free as the "mountain winds" (1.2.500) Prospero compares to Ariel's eventual freedom.

Their marriage scene makes this point abundantly clear. Ferdinand's opening speech stresses that there is no foreseeable release compensating his suffering – it is not a delightful sport, a baseness undergone nobly, or a "poor matter" that "point[s] to rich ends" (3.1.1-4); it is not in any way instrumental. The only compensation is Miranda. What matters seems to be their mutual feeling of Ferdinand's having debased himself. As Ferdinand puts it, "my sweet mistress / Weeps when she sees me work, and says such baseness / Had never like executor" (3.1.11-13) reiterating her earlier performance of compassion, like Desdemona who loves Othello for his suffering. And like Othello loving Desdemona for pitying him, this "sweet thought ... refresh[es] [his] labours" (3.1.14).

Ferdinand subsequently puts this argument in more radically materialist terms:

I am, in my condition,
 A prince, Miranda; I do think a king –
 I would not so! – And would no more endure

This wooden slavery than to suffer
 The flesh-fly blow my mouth. Hear my soul speak:
 The very instant that I saw you did
 My heart fly to your serve, there resides
 To make me slave to it, and for your sake
 Am I this patient log-man. (3.1.59-67)

Ferdinand's language of grossly material corruption by blowflies echoes Prospero's earlier pitying aside on Miranda, "Poor worm, thou art infected!". Casting his labour as a kind of mortification, a "wooden slavery" of maggot infestation, figurally turning his flesh into wood as a "patient log-man" but also as an experience of "patient" suffering, the image of Ferdinand carrying logs (a cross-like burden) may draw here on Christological imagery of kenosis, the voluntary emptying of his divine (or royal) nature in the Incarnation.¹⁸⁸ Here Ferdinand goes further than anesthesia and actually envisions a deadening or corruption of his flesh. This is not in any way the Stoic patience which denies the reality of suffering. It irks Ferdinand to descend below his state – he finds it repulsive. But he makes it worthwhile by reframing it as service for Miranda's sake; an erotic convention, even (as Petrarchan conceit) a literary one more contingent than Virgil, but also one conventionally without guarantee of reward.

This descent is reciprocated by Miranda's offer of material assistance, which he refuses, and then, after his declaration of love, her equally unqualified declaration of erotic service, explaining that she weeps

At mine unworthiness, that dare not offer
 What I desire to give, and much less take
 What I shall die to want. But this is trifling,
 And all the more it seeks to hide itself,
 The bigger bulk it shows. Hence, bashful cunning,
 And prompt me, plain and holy innocence!
 I am your wife if you will marry me;
 If not I'll die your maid. To be your fellow
 You may deny me, but I'll be your servant
 Whether you will or no. (3.1.77-86)

¹⁸⁸ I thank Deni Kasa for the suggestion of Christ's kenosis and cross-bearing here.

Given Prospero's just prior blessing that "Heavens rain grace / On that which breeds between 'em!" (3.1.74-6) – or even without it – the "bulk" Miranda claims to hide suggests pregnancy. But of course it is the burden of feeling she conceals, like Prospero's burden in the boat, not pregnancy itself. She hopes for but cannot anticipate consummation, the counterpart of the worm-blowing Ferdinand accepts as the risk of failure. She begins with a series of self-consciously erotic puns ("die", "bulk") which she characterizes as "bashful cunning"; they invoke the language of exchange, giving and taking, but subtly denying exchange by desiring to give, and never taking what is wanted. In abandoning speaking in code and openly declaring her own desires, she clearly accepts that they might not be satisfied. Her open declaration exposes herself to rejection; she may not receive what she wants but will give her love in whatever form possible, either by preserving her virginity as a "maid," or realizing an erotic "fellowship" in marriage. She characterizes both possibilities as forms of service. Ferdinand's reciprocal oath of service concludes their marriage oath "with a heart as willing / As bondage e'er of freedom" (3.1.88-89), while both kneeling to offer his service and, paradoxically, characterizing the marriage itself as a form of freedom.

Ferdinand's labour is of course quickly remitted, and a cynical interpretation would read Ferdinand's "freedom" here as seeking liberation from his log-rolling duties by marrying his jailer's daughter.¹⁸⁹ Miranda's erotic language offers the similar possibility of interpreting marriage as the mere liberation of her erotic desires. But this latter reading is more of a possibility in the secularizing setting of *The Duchess* than the providential framing of *The Tempest*. *The Tempest* urges a different reading; marriage itself is legible as a form of bondage, which the contrivance of the plot has turned into a doubly emphatic liberation. The scene establishes love as a kind of reciprocity of service and suffering despite the vast clash in registers between Ferdinand and Miranda's life experiences (to be discussed in a later section.) Their mutual willingness to suffer for each other even without reciprocation distinguishes and helps establish their love to each others' satisfaction (as well as Prospero's); it sits somewhere between Hermia and

¹⁸⁹ cp. the sillier example of Mortimer's marriage to Glendower's daughter in 1 *Henry 4*.

Lysander's definition of love as a "cross" couples bear together and Helena and Demetrius's exchange in the "wood" verging on sadomasochism. Unlike Hermia and Lysander's relation triangulated against interfering parties, Ferdinand and Miranda frame themselves as servants of each other. Like Ferdinand's "wooden slavery", Demetrius turns "wood" from madness and Helena inverts Ovidian metamorphoses into trees while, like Miranda, insisting on her service; however, unlike Miranda, Helena offers a dog-like service even when he threatens rape. If Ferdinand and Miranda's love is Christological, then, by comparison with *MND*, it resolves the earlier play's binary choice between the Eucharistic recreations of the Passion and demeaning pagan cruelty by favouring the patient daily recreation of the human Christ. This suffering is, as in their labour and language of bodily corruption, not entirely spiritual, but it is not entirely physical either. Their status as nobles helps exaggerate the pain of physical labor, and this is an important aesthetic effect tied to the play's understanding of politics (to be discussed later). But the presence of each other makes this suffering easier than that of other nobles or the servants in the play; because they are for each other signs of spiritual strength and endurance, the apparent irrationality of Prospero's provision is here easily aligned with a greater providence, neither of which Ferdinand and Miranda need worry about in the slightest.

To summarize, what begins at pointless suffering for Ferdinand, and rebellion against her father for Miranda, through the identification of spirited natures in each other which act as spiritual consolations, becomes for both a form of service which might possibly find reciprocation. The experience involves a struggle with patriarchal and political authority, experience, sensory phenomenology, and language, and concludes in a Christological pattern that idealizes a particular kind of romantic love. Ferdinand enters into a bond with Miranda, and through her, Prospero. This process is simplified by the fact that Ferdinand has no obviously competing obligations; Miranda's filial duties to her father are lightly tested but soon found to be non-exclusive. The perception of spiritual realities in one another is what permits these changes in attitude to occur and warrants the creation of new obligations. This is the play's paradigm for the discernment of spirits.

4.2 Neapolitan complications

The other characters in the play have to make do with other means to make sense of their suffering. Like Ferdinand, emerging from the shipwreck they are faced with the threat or apparent reality of political dissolution. But unlike Ferdinand they are not “single things,” and the mixture of their remaining allegiances complicates their attempts to discern their obligations and consolations, material and spiritual, which may preserve or allow the creation of new polities.

The arguments amongst the Neapolitan nobles that begin act 2 scene 1 resemble in some ways Prospero’s attempts to establish narrative senses of obligation in act 1 scene 2 in his discussions with Miranda, Ariel, and Caliban. But the Neapolitans’ immediate arguments are not about obligations to a human, but about the meaning of their prior actions and current situation; in their open-endedness they resemble more closely arguments about the action of providence. Alonso for one refuses consolation for the supposed loss of his son because he insists on reading Ferdinand’s drowning as a sign that Claribel’s marriage was a mistake:

You cram these words into mine ears against
The stomach of my sense. Would I had never
Married my daughter there, for coming thence
My son is lost, and, in my rate, she too,
Who is so far from Italy removed
I ne’er again shall see her. O thou mine heir
Of Naples and of Milan, what strange fish
Hath made his meal on thee? (2.1.104-111)

Not only does the accident of Ferdinand’s drowning causally follow from the trip to Tunis, but it also makes Alonso reconsider the marriage itself. The “strange fish” evocative of the whale that swallowed Jonah suggests that he reads the shipwreck and Ferdinand’s death as a providential chastisement for his error in forcing the marriage. This narrative takes such hold on him that he refuses to even consider Francisco’s subsequent eyewitness testimony of Ferdinand’s bold swimming towards the friendly land (2.1.112-119). Unintelligibility – the “stomach of his sense” stopping Alonso’s ears – again is marked as a problem of the readjustment of a providential perspective linked to

affective reevaluation. It's not clear whether Alonso's "sense" as stomach is rational or appetitive; feeling and thinking are both in thrall to the providential story.

While Gonzalo and Adrian attempt to console Alonso in other terms, they do not seriously contest Alonso's assessment of the error of the marriage; Gonzalo calls "truth" Sebastian's subsequent "rub[bing] the sore" (2.1.135-7). Yet they do offer a more positive analysis of the wedding, stressing Claribel's virtues (2.1.72) rather than, as Sebastian, the poor outcome. Gonzalo and Adrian's consolations instead involve assessments based on more subtle evidence concerning the situation at hand, which they read in a more general context. Gonzalo insists on the exceptionality of their preservation among millions of shipwreck victims, which he calls a "miracle" (2.1.6);¹⁹⁰ the other signs he and Adrian draw attention to are of both general and special providence like the miracle, general as the "subtle, tender, and delicate temperate," sweet air, green grass, and "everything advantageous to life" on the island, and special, as of the "rarity ... indeed almost beyond credit" (2.1.58-59) of their apparently freshly-dyed clothes. Francisco's description of the friendly land welcoming Ferdinand takes a similarly optimistic view. But as always in the play perceptions are relative, and Sebastian and Antonio contest every one of these assertions; as in the case of Prospero's lessons to Miranda in ways of looking, spiritual discernment, here the simple visual perception of providential signs, can involve a visual ambiguity dependent on broader character of the perceiver (Clark, *Vanities* 222ff).

A related difference between the two groups of nobles is Sebastian and Antonio's leaping to conclusions about the meaning recent events have for Alonso's legitimacy. Sebastian insists that the loss of Ferdinand is forever, and that "Milan and Naples have / More widows in them of this business' making / Than we bring men to comfort them. / The fault's your own" (2.1.130-3). To this hint of justification of rebellion – the collective cost of the king's foolishness – Alonso sharply responds, "so is the dear'st o'th' loss"

¹⁹⁰ Gonzalo's royalism persists here; he distinguishes the salvation of the king from the "common" case of lost sailors and merchants. The physical isolation of the nobility from the absent ship's crew makes his case.

(133), attempting to minimize the perception of collective punishment which could delegitimize his rule. Gonzalo's Golden Age fantasy takes the political argument in a different, utopian, direction, but his fantasy of sovereignty renounced similarly acknowledges the weakening of Alonso's legitimacy. His accounting however stresses not the sovereign's excess responsibility but rather his ultimate lack of responsibility.¹⁹¹ Antonio's critique of Gonzalo's Golden age fantasy revises the attempt to make final accounts when he observes that "the latter end of his commonwealth forgets the beginning" (2.1.155). But providence finds way of exceeding this sort of finality, and just as Carthage may fall and Tunis rise nearby in some sort of subtle continuity, and Gonzalo's fantasy of the Boatswain's punishment may find their unspecified means, so may his other fantasies have a moral continuity imperceptible to the skeptics (Hollander). Though Alonso calls his fantasy "nothing" (2.1.170), Gonzalo turns this around to mock Sebastian and Antonio's sensibility as one that is oversubtle: "I do well believe your highness, and did it to minister occasion to these gentlemen, who are of such sensible and nimble lungs that they always use to laugh at nothing" (2.1.171-3). Their conspiracy (to be discussed soon) indulges a different fantasy of power, partly built on Alonso's apparent lapses of rule ("there be that can rule Naples / As well as he that sleeps" (2.1.260-1)). But this fantasy is belied by Ariel's abortion of the plot at the scene's conclusion. Ariel, though airy, is not quite nothing; he is a residual force of continuity made concrete though in ways the Neapolitans can't quite grasp.

Again, it is wordplay that makes the dynamics of this grappling with providence clear; and again, local conflict and unintelligibility can be resolved by the audience's superior perspective. The wordplay at the end of the scene ironizes the tension between the supposedly prudential schemers and Gonzalo's partial perception of providence; prudence, providence, and foresight are all etymological conjugates. Suggesting the murder of the sleeping Gonzalo, punningly putting "to the perpetual wink for aye" (eye) this "Sir Prudence" (2.1.283-4) the scheming Antonio belittles Gonzalo's lack of

¹⁹¹ Again Gonzalo's royalism survives; Alonso and Sebastian's stress on widows, dismissed by Gonzalo, is a self-serving populist pose.

foresight and practical prudence in his golden age fantasy; but the play draws on the etymological link between prudence and providence when Ariel explains to the audience that Prospero “through his art foresees the danger / That you, his friend, are in, and sends me forth – / For else his project dies – to keep them living” (2.1.295-297). He then wakes Gonzalo with a rhyme about “open-eyed conspiracy” (298-9), turning Antonio’s punning around and morally and epistemically belittling him. Prospero’s “foresight” and provision of Ariel partly models divine providence, as Gonzalo’s waking exclamation, “Now, good angels / Preserve the king!” (304-5) suggests. But Ariel’s explanation stresses a subtle difference; it is Prospero’s project, not his love for Gonzalo or for the king that is his deeper purpose, and Ariel is not an angel. Gonzalo may therefore be said to perceive only partly the providential situation; Alonso similarly is being punished by a higher power, only not the power he thinks, or in the way he imagines, or for the decision he regrets. The point is that one person’s prudence may be another person’s providence, and discernment of the difference is challenging. The differences are too subtle to be perceived by Alonso and Gonzalo, much less the conspirators. But the sleep comforts Alonso, and abandoning his fatalism, the search for Ferdinand resumes.

If Gonzalo implies that Ariel is angelic, from Caliban’s perspective Prospero’s spirits are demonic. His speech opening 2.2 evokes the ravings of *Lear*’s Poor Tom, haunted by the foul fiend:

His spirits hear me,
And yet I needs must curse. But they’ll nor punch,
Fright me with urchin-shows, pitch me I’t’h’ mire,
Nor lead me like a firebrand in the dark
Out of my way, unless he bid ‘em; but
For every trifle are they set upon me,
Sometimes like apes that mow and chatter at me,
And after bit me; then like hedgehogs, which
Lie tumbling in my barefoot way, and mount
Their pricks at my footfall; sometime am I
All wound with adders, who with cloven tongues
Do hiss me into madness— (2.2.3-14)

Theologically, the strict subordination of the spirits to Prospero’s command models the strict subordination of the devil to God, though this is little comfort for Caliban the

compulsive curser, who contests the justice of his punishment for “every trifle.” The demoniac, seeing Trinculo approaching, and then Stephano, fears tormenting by another demon; similarly Trinculo seeing clouds fears another storm like the one he has just passed through. In another parallel to *Lear*, for him the rain raineth everyday. I raise *King Lear* to make two points: To characterize Caliban’s ravings as stereotypical of the demon-tormented, and to observe the pairing of demonic and natural causes of suffering. The complication that Edgar is faking is generally irrelevant for this point, except that here the inverse question of Ariel’s nature is raised.

That is, whereas the Neapolitan nobles begin by looking for providential narratives to explain their past experiences, Trinculo and Caliban begin by predicting futures of suffering — natural or spiritual. Caliban sees Trinculo as “a spirit of his ... to torment me / For bringing wood in slowly” (2.2.15-16); Trinculo sees “another storm brewing,” hears it, like Ariel, “sing[ing] I’ th’ wind”, and predicts that “yon sam black cloud, yon huge one, looks like a foul bombard that would shed his liquor ... yon same cloud cannot choose but fall by pailfuls” (19-24). Like Ferdinand’s initial resistance to Prospero, both prudentially try to avoid these inevitable persecutions by hiding from them. Given this inevitability the distinction between the agents who serve Prospero and the cloud that “cannot choose” may be practically moot, but the difference between the sufferings Caliban and Trinculo fear is something like the distinction between special and general providence Gonzalo and Adrian hint at in the prior scene, though with an entirely negative focus. As inevitable sources of pain, they are beyond politics or obligation.

But like Gonzalo’s discernments, Caliban and Trinculo’s predictions are partially true and partially false. Trinculo doesn’t torment Caliban, but Stephano sort of does; Stephano arrives bearing not rainy bombard liquor but his own “celestial liquor” (111). And they eventually appear to be neither inevitable nor demonic; Stephano is treated by Trinculo as a human, and is eventually treated by Caliban as a spirit of a better sort, though with some confusion as to whether he is a “god” (142) or “wondrous man” (158). The comedy of Trinculo joining with Caliban in thinking the apparition of the supposedly drowned Stephano a devil intervenes, and Stephano perceiving Trinculo speaking out of two mouths and knowing his name similarly changes tack from thinking

Caliban a monster to thinking him a devil. Wordplay and unintelligibility again mark the readjustment of affective and providential boundaries and the assessment of spiritual identities. But, in a more modest version of Miranda and Ferdinand's recognitions, eventually all recognize each other as human, if motley (mooncalf, jester, drunken butler), and help to assure themselves by touching each others bodies and providing reasonable (non-miraculous) explanations for their presence – Stephano escaping on the butt of sack, and making his own birch-bark bottle, Trinculo hiding from the storm. These recognitions of humanity create the potential space of politics. Trinculo and Stephano are already friends of a sort (2.2.95), and need nothing other than their assurance of their identities to re-establish an association. But Trinculo and Stephano's mundane explanations to each other contrast with their opportunistic mythologizing of Stephano as the man in the moon, exploiting the "credulous" (2.2.140) monster Caliban, who must be incorporated into their new polity in other ways.

Stephano's liquor is the main agent that wins Caliban over to his side. The "celestial liquor" is a multifaceted parody of spiritual power; initially a form of spiritual therapy approximating exorcism, it resolves the ambiguity of the "monster's" two voices from an "ague" (64) or fit, but instead of exorcism produces the "venting" of his friend Trinculo. In an imitation of the perplexities of providential political collectivities, we cannot tell whether this is an exorcism, a birth, or a fishy vomiting-up like Jonah's; which party is the demonic agent, which the angelic?¹⁹² The liquor is also a direct source of obligation, either as debt or for its epistemic powers; as Stephano explains, "you cannot tell who's your friend – open your chops again" (2.2.81). The liquor is also a model for theological inspiration (it gives language (81) – intelligibility again!; it takes the place of the bible - "kiss the book" (122) etc). But it is also a source of emotional rewards, joy and comfort, compensating for experiences of suffering. For example, in obvious ways, Trinculo and Stephano's joy at finding each other is augmented by drink. But more dramatically, it displaces the problems of providential narratives, wiping out the obligations and fears

¹⁹² As an inducer of birth, the liquor is also a surrogate of lunar influence. cp Caliban's status as "mooncalf." cp also the ambiguous apricots in *The Duchess*, or Faustus's cloud-birth-vomiting.

Caliban and Trinculo begin the scene with. Recognizing Stephano, Trinculo asks, “is the storm overblown?” (105), and Caliban transfers his allegiance, forgetting his demons. Like the Neapolitan nobles, Stephano begins his scene with two “scurvy tune[s]” (43, 54) legible as narratives of providential causation, his aborted song about going no more to sea and dying ashore, and the longer story of going to sea after rejection by Kate (who preferred tailors to sailors). The first song’s resemblance to Gonzalo’s claim that the Boatswain would hang rather than drown, and the second song’s resemblance to the story blaming the wreck on Claribel’s marriage are important for the reason that Stephano rejects both songs and prefers instead the “comfort” (54) of his bottle. Whereas Trinculo and Caliban initially try to prudently hide from providential suffering, Stephano rejects the consolations of providential narratives sought by the Neapolitan nobles and replaces them entirely with a spirit of his own.

5 Lunatic autonomy, atheistic and polytheistic

Indeed, both groups of rebels indulge in fantasies of autonomy which reject the idea of suffering as a virtue. Their arguments are simultaneously moral and metaphysical, linking ethics and ontology; moreover, both groups’ ontological figurations claim to displace and usurp lunar influence. Antonio and Sebastian’s Machiavellianism is linked to an atheistic Epicureanism; Caliban and Stephano’s drunkenness is a version of Stoic pantheism.¹⁹³ But in both cases political claims of autonomy are theoretically undermined by an unwillingness to suffer for each other, and apparent solidarities, affective and linguistic, break down under this pressure.

While the other nobles indulge in the “comforter” sleep (2.1.194), Antonio and Sebastian are excluded from the drowsy polity which sleeps “as by consent” (2.1.201) through their awareness that their “spirits are nimble” (2.1.200). What Ariel calls Sebastian and Antonio’s “wide-eyed conspiracy” (2.1.299) is literally a breathing together, a form of pneumatic identity that makes each other intelligible. Yet Antonio and Sebastian begin

¹⁹³ I adopt the arguments of Reid Barbour (*English Epicures and Stoics*) for the broad significance of these philosophical paradigms in Stuart political and religious culture.

by describing themselves as excluded from the consent of the sleepers, but paradoxically and strategically phrase their tentative probing of each other's intentions in the language of dream and noise. As Sebastian says to Antonio, slowly clueing in, "there's meaning in thy snores" (2.1.216). As in the opening scene, factions – whether consenting or conspiring – are marked by their mutual intelligibility or incomprehension, only here sleeping and waking, snoring and speaking, take the place of the distinction between noise and language. And these positions are relative and temporary; Ariel's spirits are of course more nimble than Sebastian and Antonio's, and Ariel will defend the consenting sleepers from the conspirators, waking them and inverting their positions.

Though outmanoeuvred by Ariel, Antonio and Sebastian's language of dream is just as strategic in its relativism. It suggests a liminal state in which every political obligation is fungible, in which Gonzalo's golden age fantasy is replaced with the fantasy of rebellion and usurpation. Sebastian's paradoxical claim that he has "eyes wide open – standing, speaking, moving, / And yet so fast asleep" (2.1.212-13) recalls Faustus's perplexity at Mephistopheles claim that he is in hell while walking and talking; the allusion marks their spiritual disorientation. As a parody of spiritual discernment, this fantasy grounds itself not in providence but in fortune conceived in a Machiavellian manner as masterable by seizing the opportunity – *virtú* takes the place of virtuous patience. Moreover this opportunism is phrased in a language that denies any form of external influence. Gonzalo's insult before falling asleep that Antonio and Sebastian "are gentlemen of brave mettle" who "would lift the moon out of her sphere if she would continue in it five weeks without changing" (2.1.180-2) is answered by Antonio's promise to "teach" Sebastian "how to flow" (2.1.219); the moon will not control his tides, but Sebastian will.¹⁹⁴

This claim to spiritual self-mastery, to be fully awake, must moreover by comparison make all others look not only weak or asleep but practically dead: Antonio calls Gonzalo

¹⁹⁴ Laoutaris (133-4) links this to a "parthenogenic fantasy," citing the subsequent lines describing the conspiracy as a birth. But Laoutaris sees Prospero's program as being hardly distinguishable from the conspirators' or Sycorax's.

a “spirit of persuasion, only” (2.1.232) who is a “lord of weak remembrance ... who shall be of as little memory when he is earthed” (2.1.231-2), lacking adequate power to influence, essential mental faculties, and any legacy. Moreover the heir, Claribel, “dwells

Ten leagues beyond man’s life; she that from Naples
Can have no note unless the sun were post–
The man I’ th’ moon’s too slow – till newborn chins
Be rough and razor able; (2.1.244-48)

Given her distance she is outside the practical realm of concern, that of a political lifetime or generation; Claribel is like the distant Epicurean gods, who may exist, but only on a planet far, far, away. Neither she nor the moon can have any moral sway.

Paradoxically, however, in presenting their Machiavellian *virtù* as a form of inevitability, Antonio’s claims to independence slip into a parody of the other nobles’ providential reasoning around Claribel’s marriage,

she that from whom
We all were sea-swallowed, though some cast again–
And by that destiny, to perform an act
Whereof what’s past is prologue, what to come
In yours and my discharge. (2.1.248-252)

Destiny, or the language of “performance” here that Luke Wilson has argued conflates theatrical and commercial contracts (165-6), imply the inevitability of what is to come next, the constraint rather than the freedom of the will. His reminder of his own usurpation of Prospero, telling Sebastian to “look how well my garments sit upon me, / Much feature than before” (2.1.270-271) similarly echo’s Gonzalo’s attention to the providential signs of his fresh garments.

In other words, prudential Machiavellianism, the denial of the “deity in [his] bosom” (2.1.276) conscience, lying between Antonio and Milan, becomes an atheistic parody of Providentialism phrased as an Epicurean materialism. The denial of Claribel’s influence through the inadequacy of cosmological messengers like the sun and the moon between Naples and Tunis, “twixt which regions / There is some space” (2.1.244-45) turns the

Epicurean vacuum of space into a moral chaos lacking any basic rule or measure, as Antonio explains:

A space whose every cubit
Seems to cry out, 'How shall that Claribel
Measure us back to Naples? Keep in Tunis,
And let Sebastian wake.' Says this were death
That now hath seized them, why, they were no worse
Than now they are. (2.1.255-260)

Denying the difference between death and sleep, a conventional philosophical (atheistic) consolation for mortality, is here turned into an excuse for murder. Given the basic dramatic premise of the scene – that sleeping and waking distinguish political factions, but that the difference is perhaps a relative one, and in any case easily fungible – this is an especially dangerous position. Given this utter lack of ethical grounding, Sebastian and Antonio assert their affection, but cannot swear by anything; their agreement is premised only on a promise of reciprocal reward and imitation, as Sebastian concludes:

Thy case, dear friend,
Shall be my precedent: as thou got'st Milan,
I'll come by Naples. Draw thy sword – one stroke
Shall free thee from the tribute which thou payest,
And I the King shall love thee. (2.1.288-292)

The irony the promise of love and freedom from tribute is that tribute was the reward promised Alonso for his help in Prospero's usurpation; the supposed liberation seems to only invite further betrayal given the apparent weakness of love to regulate bonds among the treacherous. Antonio is promising to kill Alonso, Sebastian's precedent as his friend. Antonio's case is phrased as a precedent, not as a common case of permanently shared interests; but if Antonio will not keep his promises, and there is nothing to force or induce him to, he is beyond the realm of political obligation. His conspiracies are temporary, his allies arbitrarily alienable. He is not willing to suffer, period. And so usurpation will inevitably follow usurpation, freedom to act becoming the compulsion to betray.

Isolated rulers don't fare well in this play. Antonio's advice to Sebastian draws on the negative models of Prospero's withdrawal and Alonso's refusal of advice against the

marriage of Claribel. Ferdinand is also nominally punished by Prospero for his claim to be a “single thing,” or Naples “myself.” But against atheistic or materialist excesses of sovereignty, Stephano and Caliban assume a theistic excess. Caliban curses Prospero not by denying the influence of the moon over the tides, but by invoking against Prospero’s sun its watery power over disease: “All the infections that the sun sucks up / From bogs, fens, flats, on Prosper fall, and make him / By inchmeal a disease!” (2.2.1-3).¹⁹⁵ As discussed in the last section, against the plenitude of Prospero’s spirits surrounding Caliban or the heavy weather Trinculo fears, both indicative of a persecutory providence, both happily receive Stephano’s liquor, a consolatory alternative spiritual excess which Stephano encourages Caliban to associate with the moon.

Though their desire for pleasure makes this claim somewhat counterintuitive, I want to suggest that if Sebastian and Antonio are legible as epicurean atheists, Trinculo and Caliban’s fears distribute two readings of Stoic pantheism. Drunkenness is, after all, a form of numbness approximating Stoic apathy. Trinculo, fearing the inevitable natural weather patterns identifies the stoic *pneuma* with nature; his capacity to “swim like a duck” and shelter from the storm are purely natural responses to natural phenomena, stoic endurance and accommodation to externalities. On the other hand, the terms Caliban uses to describe Stephano – calling him a god, swearing to be his subject, adoring him as the man in the moon, then again asking him to be his god and swearing to serve him as a subject – present a confusion of kings and deities, and an artificial choice of both suggestive of both polytheism – the imputation of *pneuma* to all objects in the universe – but also a corresponding idolatry in its conflation of the human and the divine.

Again, as in the case of Antonio and Sebastian’s fantasies of atheistic autonomy, these polytheistic or pantheistic fantasies are represented as untenable both through the play’s language and its political theorizing. Just as Antonio and Sebastian confuse waking and sleeping, Stephano and company confuse sobriety and drunkenness; rather than the

¹⁹⁵ Laoutaris (137) links this moment to Antonio and Sebastian’s parthenogenic fantasy of standing bogwater. I am thinking of Titania’s speech in *Midsummer*: “Therefore the moon, the governess of floods,/ Pale in her anger, washes all the air, / That rheumatic diseases do abound” (2.1.103-5).

wordplay of snores, they flirt with unintelligibility through drunken belligerence and Ariel's ventriloquist trick of "giving the lie" in act 3 scene 2. Theoretically, Caliban's offer to show Stephano the island's natural wealth and instruct him in ways of trapping marmosets, inviting Stephano to follow him rather than vice versa, hints at the later complexities of the relationship, in which Caliban seems to be in control more than Stephano; an idol, king or god, is dependent on his worshippers, after all. Caliban's song of freedom that ends act 2 scene 2 emphasizes this duality. The irony of Caliban calling enslavement to a new master "freedom" is well remarked, but less often noticed is the song's implication that if one is free to choose one's master at will, mastery is relatively meaningless, and the servant will not in any case endure suffering for very long. Despite the vast ontological difference between the rebel groups' theorizing, like Sebastian and Antonio's conspiracy, the opportunistic dissolution of obligations when the going gets rough again appears as the paradoxical heart of their arguments.

6 Hubris and excess: aesthetic supplementation

Indeed, Stephano's fantasy of autonomy, inheriting the island here with his "fellow" (2.2) Trinculo, changes in their next scene together. As they grow drunker, Stephano's hubris increases; he claims invulnerability, that "the sea could not drown me" (3.2.12) and to have swum thirty-five leagues, rather than floating in. He also rejects the needs of nature – and Trinculo – to drink water. But as he learns of Prospero's existence, the strict hierarchies of rule he imagines are inverted as Caliban demands more from his "master" than liquor – the punishment of Trinculo to preserve his dignity and the commission of a murder – in exchange for promises Caliban never fulfills. Caliban's mastery over Stephano, the man-in-the-moon, becomes theurgy, the near-equivalent of the magic power of Sycorax over the moon or Prospero over the sun. Caliban repeatedly offers his promise to serve, but this is a promise he's already made, and seems to be implicitly retracting. Indeed Caliban demands not only the punishment of Trinculo and the murder of Prospero but amusement and pleasure; while Stephano began by mocking Caliban, now Caliban demands that Stephano sing to make him merry. In doing so the power Stephano claims to have appropriated descends completely into Caliban's hands.

Like Stephano's condescension to Caliban's demands, but unlike his rejection of Trinculo's material needs, Alonso patiently acknowledges Gonzalo's need to rest (3.3.3-4), and the appearance of the spirit banquet is at least initially welcomed as satisfying their bodies' needs for refreshment. Whereas the servant plot focuses on spiritual needs of inferiors – their dignity, their wine – the courtier plot treats their material needs. In both cases the supposed sovereign fails to provide a necessary ingredient. Alonso begins by abandoning hope, acknowledging the dulling of his spirits, while Stephano begins by foregoing water and refusing to reconcile Trinculo and Caliban. External forces must supplement the sovereigns, providing an opportunity for the performance of sovereign judgement or discernment and then the satisfaction of their subjects' needs. Ariel gives Caliban the lie in Trinculo's voice, prompting Stephano's exercise of slapstick punishment, and then providing initially disturbing but subsequently pleasing music. The spirit show or "drollery" is a similar opportunity for Alonso to exercise judgement, which he expects to be rewarded with the food of the banquet. The external supplements to sovereignty – the natural bounty of the islanders, or the free music of Ariel's spirits – both temporarily seem to shore up the sovereign's rule.

A purely political reading might argue that these external supplements are a form of colonial exploitation of agents external to the polity. But political-theological readings are hard to avoid. In the very act of providing these external supplements providentially guaranteeing the material and spiritual obligations of sovereignty, both scenes again stage misrecognitions of spirits; sovereign discernment fails. While Stephano and Trinculo initially fear Ariel's music as demonic, prompting exclamations of guilt prefiguring those Ariel-as-harpy conjures from Alonso, Caliban explains:

Be not afeard; the isle is full of noises,
 Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not.
 Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
 Will hum about mine ears, and sometime voices
 That, if I then had waked after long sleep,
 Will make me sleep again: and then, in dreaming,
 The clouds methought would open and show riches
 Ready to drop upon me that, when I waked,
 I cried to dream again. (3.2.133-140)

Caliban's speech here is often remarked for its beauty, its hints of perception of deeper spiritual realities; it is almost a natural theology that points to the need for the spiritual supplement of revelation. But Caliban says nothing here about the spirits that hurt and delight not which so preoccupied him in his previous scene - and here led to Trinculo's harm. Stephano's response treats Caliban's dream of freely available – providential – spiritual riches as purely instrumental provision, a resource to be exploited for his own benefit. "This will prove a brave kingdom to me," he gloats, "where I shall / have my music for nothing" (3.2.141-2.) Pirated music! But Ariel is, we know, capable of both harm and delight; in their next scene, he will have lead them into a bog full of offensive airs rather than sweet ones – foul smells, not delightful noises. Similarly, the spirits at the banquet drollery, which Gonzalo insists are human despite Alonso's initial fear, seem at first to be an arbitrary provision of nature (or the islanders), providing both food and entertainment, unmerited for these sinners; until, of course, Ariel-as-harpy transforms to tell them otherwise.

These misrecognitions have as consequences the deprivation of the very supplements they imagine. Stephano, Trinculo, and Caliban lose their bottle in the bog, losing both dignity (smelling of horse-piss and becoming the butt of jokes) and spirit (wine); as Stephano observes, "there is not only disgrace and dishonour in that, monster, but an infinite loss," and Trinculo adds in, "that's more to me than my wetting; this this is your harmless fairy, monster!" (4.1.208-211). Caliban moreover fears transformation into a barnacle or ape with forehead villanous low, a loss of intellect and humanity enabling his perception of heaven's riches; and the three are subsequently chased away by Prospero's spirit hounds, treated as animals and suffering the hounds' noise rather than Ariel's music. Similarly, Ariel's message to Alonso, Sebastian, and Antonio completely contradicts Gonzalo's naturalistic explanation of the shapes at the banquet as "people of the island" despite their "monstrous shapes," a claim he makes partly through their "gentle-kind" "manners" exceeding those of "our human generation" (3.3.29-33), and partly through comparing them to stories of "mountaineers / dewlapped like bulls" and "men/ whose heads stood in their breasts" (44-47). Compared to Sebastian's more singular comparison of the shapes to unicorns or the phoenix, Gonzalo grounds his

confidence in reading the shapes as humans who share a civil, mannered compassion with errant travellers (recalling Ferdinand and Miranda's discernment of each others' humanity). Whether the shapes are read as wondrous preternature or human nature which receives them generously, Ariel's speech insists on the contradictory claim that these men have forfeited their rights to both human society and natural provision. At the command of a secularized "Destiny" (53) and "Fate" (61) who "hath to instrument this lower world / And what is in't" (53-5), the three have been rejected by the sea who has "belch[ed] [them] up" to suffer on the "island / where man doth not inhabit – you 'amongst men / Being most unfit to live" (56-8). Their Machiavellian singularity he turns into the recklessness of the "mad", which he casts as a "valour" with which men "hang and drown / their proper selves" (58-60). Ariel's materialist explanations that he and his "ministers" are "invulnerable" to the "elements" of their swords, and ambiguous suggestion that they are now too heavy to be lifted anyways (61-65), seem like improvised explanations that are not his main point; they do however draw the audience's attention to his material nature, the partial deceptiveness of his claims, and the way his audience seems to require materialist explanations. Yet his point is a moral one which imposes a structure of justice on the material universe directly by cloaking providential thought in naturalistic paganism. As a consequence of their treatment of Prospero and his innocent daughter Miranda, "the powers delaying, not forgetting, have incensed the seas and shores, yea all the creatures / Against your peace" (70-75). Rather than death, hell, or purgatory, the suffering is entirely immanent, a "lingering perdition .. In this most desolate isle" unless "heart's sorrow / And a clear life ensuing takes its place" (75-82).

There is an important sense in which the supposed and misrecognized consolations of both groups of Neapolitans – servants and nobles – parody sacramentalism, particularly in the elements of wine and bread contained in Stephano's bottle and in the spirit banquet respectively.¹⁹⁶ Stephan's parody of the language of the spirit bring out this aspect of his

¹⁹⁶ Beckwith (150ff) also suggests the spirit banquet's relationship to sacramental communion, though in different terms.

wine-mongering clearly, and Ariel and Prospero's language of "ministers" and crediting Ariel with "grace" does the same for his performance of the harpy (along with Ariel's reference to "elements"). So too Alonso's instruction to his brother to "stand to" (3.3.52) and Stephano's standing with Trinculo while making Caliban kneel in supplication (3.2.38) may suggest Jacobean controversies over kneeling or standing to receive the Lord's Supper. In both cases the English Protestant stress on the nutritive functioning of the elements of the sacrament, making them lively and natural images ordained by God (Waldron, *Reformations of the Body*), is in itself presented as inadequate. This is not merely the function of the dramatic irony of the audience's full awareness that Stephano is merely a drunk, and that Ariel and his lesser spirits are merely acting on Prospero's orders. Rather, the Neapolitans in both cases believe that their consolations or supplements are freely given – in theological terms, acts of grace – and their understanding of this graciousness is aesthetically coded. The nutritive and even spiritual functions of the bread and wine require a supplementation by aesthetic performances and the pleasures they create: Stephano's songs and Ariel's, or the dances and manners of the spirits at the banquet. The problem is that these aesthetic performances are ambiguous. Are they signs of more important pleasures or pains, spiritual or material, products of or means to them, or to be considered sufficient in themselves? Moreover, they tend to be volatile, changing suddenly from pleasurable to unpleasant – for example, Ariel's pleasing songs turn into the unpleasing smell of horse piss, and the banquet spirits fine dances turn into mocks and mows, and then are replaced by Ariel as a "graceful" but terrifying harpy. Given this lability, can aesthetic judgement perform the task of discernment of spirits? Whether aesthetics is conceived of as a translation or medium of political or theological obligation, the play demands its deeper consideration.

7 Aesthetic discernment and demonology: from political theology to civil religion, and back again

One way to approach the question is to observe that in some respects Prospero's magic becomes more obviously metatheatrical as the play moves on; particularly in the play's second half, Prospero's magic no longer creates storms or even directly induces mood swings (à la Ferdinand's consolation) but affects its subjects increasingly indirectly:

through Ariel's ventriloquism causing Stephano to beat Trinculo and Ariel's song; through the spirit banquet and harpy performance causing fear, despair, and anger; through the wedding masque's rather inert delights. This observation informs the recent argument of Genevieve Guenther that the play confronts and exploits King James' hostility towards magicians by transforming the character of Prospero from a potentially harmful, even satanic, conjurer to a practitioner of a theatre whose only aim is a disinterested desire to please (100). Along the way Guenther observes the "instrumental aesthetics" of the harpy scene's ability to cause fear and penance, at least for Alonso (100-101). Guenther more generally defines instrumental aesthetics as the belief that "literary pleasure itself produces, or is meant to produce, normative ethical and social effects in readers and spectators" (4), an efficaciousness she finds frequently and anxiously associated with magic. But she argues that *The Tempest* moves past the domain of instrumental aesthetics to the realm of mere disinterested pleasure-giving and consolation for death, in the process claiming a sphere of autonomy for the theatre, a harmlessness immune to James' potential hostility which can still enunciate a plea for mercy against James' absolutism.

I raise Guenther's argument as a representative because even though it is a recent study whose rich approach to early modern aesthetics is grounded in the polemical conflation of poetry and sorcery, it ends up arguing that *The Tempest* reaches an almost entirely secular end point. Moreover, in Guenther's argument, political and theological neutrality go together. There are other arguments that reach one or both of these neutralizations in different ways, and Guenther's argument does little to explain why sorcery is needed to get there. I want to argue in this section that there is a much more particular logic framing Prospero's artistic practices, one which is inseparable from the play's political and theological concerns, and framed by its constant interrogation of the relationship between the languages of providence and contract.

One initial objection is that Guenther's argument sidesteps the main problems that I have been raising: that suffering is sometimes theologically, morally, or prudentially necessary; that pain can also be an important aesthetic experience, that discernment of aesthetic pleasure or pain is fickle and changeable, that the beautiful consolations of art,

like other supposed consolations, can mislead. Alonso's initial reaction to the harpy, for example, is not pleasure, but despair. Moreover for most of the play the aesthetic experiences of pleasure and pain are embedded in broader political and theological arguments about providence and obligation – they are never excluded from them, but always form part of their calculuses. Even the “entertainer” of the grieving king may receive a “dollar” as Sebastian jokes (2.1.18-19). But as the last section of my argument suggests, aesthetic pleasure may in some cases be difficult to distinguish from the material and spiritual necessities of life, what sovereigns or deities may be under obligation to provide. Prospero's discussion of Gonzalo's providential role runs together these categories suggestively; after claiming they came ashore “by providence divine,” Prospero elaborates:

Some food we had, and some fresh water, that
 A noble Neapolitan, Gonzalo,
 Out of his charity, who being then appointed
 Master of this design, did give us, with
 Rich garments, linens, stuffs, and necessities,
 Which since have steamed much; so of his gentleness,
 Knowing I loved my books, he furnished me
 From mine own library with volumes that
 I prize above my dukedom. (1.2.160-169)

From food to luxuries, this list of “necessaries” also includes books, productively ambiguous as to whether they are magical, instrumental, or literary. But while these books exceed Prospero's dukedom in value, the play's other aesthetic constructions unsettle the role of culture to an extent that its pure instrumentality or utter political neutrality are both extreme positions the play resists.

Generically, theatre is far from the only artistic form the play exploits, and this presents an alternative explanation for the supposed movement to aesthetic inertness that Guenther detects in the wedding masque. The play's artistic forms move up the social ladder, the servants indulging in popular songs and catches sung by themselves or played by Ariel as the broadside cartoon “picture of nobody” (3.2; Wilson 216ff); the Neapolitan nobles perceiving the spirit banquet through the genres of travellers tales, followed by Ariel performing a Virgilian harpy pastiche from the *Aeneid* (3.3); and

Ferdinand being treated to the royal art of the masque, followed by Prospero engaging in the kingly sport of the hunt (4.1). These three scenes' performances present pairs of aestheticized moral fictions, each varying in the degree to which they are in Gunther's terms "instrumental," and each suiting their audience in particular ways. For example, popular songs no matter their singer may not be worth moral comment; traveller's tales may be merely entertaining while Virgil may instill moral virtues; the masque may be a refined but inert delight, the hunt an athletic practice for war, if a morally suspect one.

In other words, while Guenther observes that Prospero calls the wedding masque a "vanity of mine art" (4.1.41) and argues that it is "empty ... of magical instrumentality" (101), there are nevertheless a very special set of conditions that make this inertness possible. First, as Prospero explains in the next line, the masque importantly fulfills his "promise" to the expectant Ferdinand and Miranda. Again, this aesthetic production is embedded in a scheme of contractual obligation; it itself is the condition of a promise that must be fulfilled by the sovereign. Second, it needn't be instrumental in Guenther's sense because Ferdinand and Miranda have already proved and promised their compliance to the moral ideals the masque embodies; the banishment of Venus and Cupid from Juno's presence has already in some manner been enacted by Ferdinand's promise to respect Miranda's virginity until they are properly married in Italy, and whatever her minor betrayal of her father, Miranda has not run away with Ferdinand like Proserpina with Dis.¹⁹⁷ Third, they (or at least Ferdinand) are able to see through the masque, to discern both its ficticity and the spirits enacting it. Ferdinand praises the "majestic vision" as "harmonious charmingly" (4.1.118-119), and in the next breath asks if the performers are spirits; Prospero assents that they are "Spirits, which by mine art / I have from their confines called to enact / My present fancies" (4.1.120-3), prompting Ferdinand to exclaim, "so rare a wondered father and a wife / Makes this place paradise" (123-4). Ferdinand's invocation of Eden simultaneously praises his own Adamic prelapsarian powers of perception and Prospero's god-like creativity, writing both here under the sign of an aesthetic exchange between artist and audience. But Ferdinand and

¹⁹⁷ The masque's promise of fertility however remains to be fulfilled; I discuss this in section 9.

Prospero of course have worked up to this lucidity coupled to admiration. Ferdinand's initial impulse to "resist" the "entertainment" (1.2.466) of imprisonment and rough food (acorn husks, sea water), which Miranda read as a mark of his nobility ("he's gentle, and not fearful" (1.2.469)), can only now collapse into a pre-hierarchical fantasy like Gonzalo's Golden Age, reflecting the winterless content of Ceres' masque, in which art and its perception require no labour. Though realized through his kenotic descent through his labour or "trial," Ferdinand's perspicuity at the masque is a product of his detachment established before the masque begins, the cold virgin snow upon his heart abating the ardour of his liver (4.1.55-6). His wooden slavery ended, Ferdinand is himself inert as a spectator; this makes the masque itself inert, whatever its message.

There is certainly the possibility of reading the play's stress on aesthetic cultivation as elitist, part of the "reformation of manners" described by Norbert Elias and others through which the elite distanced themselves from popular culture. The fact that Ferdinand is a prince makes us suspect this possibility, despite his kenotic claims. But contrary suggestions abound. Stephano's denigration of his songs beginning 2.1 as "scurvy tunes" suggests a social-climbing parody of the elitist position. The word "manners" itself is used twice in the play, both times in anti-elitist ways. First, Gonzalo praises the manners of the spirit-islanders as "more gentle-kind than of / our human generation you shall find / Many, nay, almost any," earning Prospero's wry aside that "some of you there present / Are worse than devils" (3.3.31-6). Second, Prospero at the end of the play describes Caliban to Alonso as "as disproportioned in his manners / As in his shape." But Caliban follows up with his own statement of discernment: "What a thrice-double ass / Was I, to take this drunkard for a god / And worship this dull fool!" (5.1.290-297). Paralleling Ferdinand's positive discernment of Prospero's spirits, Caliban here negatively discerns Stephano's inspiration as mere drunkenness. Discernment in all cases must be learned, and certainly Caliban is capable of it. Prospero's education of Miranda certainly includes attempts to teach it: recall his description of Ferdinand stained by grief, beauty's canker, and his insistence to her regarding Ferdinand's humanity. If Ferdinand initially perceives Miranda as a goddess due to his humanistic education and

citation of Virgil, Prospero re-educates him too. There is little finally essentialist about aesthetic cultivation in the play, nor is it clear that cultivation is ennobling

Nevertheless, difference in aesthetic sensibility are also manifested in the relativity of perceptions among the plays characters in ways that confound the potentially reformative aims of Ariel's performances and indicate moral difference among their audience members. For the nobles, the phenomenological problems of whether the grass is green or tawny, whether their clothes are fresh or stained, turn into more complex aesthetic differences in the reactions of Alonso, Antonio, and Sebastian to Ariel's harpy performance (and Gonzalo's presumed ignorance of it). Alonso seems to see the winds, waves, and thunder enunciating his sin, which he despairingly accepts; Antonio and Sebastian see demons they defy. Ariel's ventriloquism trick causes similar confusion among the servants: his simple giving the lie fails to convince anyone, and his subsequent music momentarily frightens Stephano and Trinculo into panicked repentance until Caliban persuades them falsely of his harmlessness. These differences of perception persist in the disagreement between Caliban and the others regarding the clothes or "frippery" Prospero leaves out to trap them. Caliban's superior sensibility in the latter case is however in service of his murder plot, and unable to save him from Prospero's wrath.

The juxtaposition of the pleasures of the wedding masque and the conspirators' unpleasant abandonment in a bog stinking of horse piss and pursuit by hounds is probably the most potent complication of Guenther's argument. For the masque seems to draw on controversies over James's masquing and the political and ideological role of this art, even and including its occasional claims to inertness that Guenther emphasizes. Prospero's masque imitates James' masques' metafictional self-justifying arguments for their ability to teach innocent virtue through harmless and wholesome recreation by portraying humble country dancers (see for example Leah Marcus's discussion of Jonson's 1612 *Love Restored*; 24-38, and her discussion of Jacobean appeals to country values (64ff)). But James's masques were criticized as a wasteful excess and distraction, like his habit of hunting. While Prospero is indeed momentarily distracted from pressing politics by the vanity of the masque, he turns to James's other favourite recreation,

hunting, to handle the threat. Treating the conspirators as animals, his dogs named Fury and Tyrant sarcastically critique their perception of his tyranny. Those who are so uncultivated as to mistake him as a tyrant and misrecognize either the cultivating aims or simple inert charms of his masque will be proved doubly wrong through poetic justice; a recreation more easily read as useful, the hunt, will be turned on them.¹⁹⁸

If the problems of relative perceptions and the politics of culture complicate Guenther's claim to play's fantasy of aesthetic inertness, what of the other premise of Guenther's argument – that instrumental aesthetics was defended to counteract fears of demonic manipulations, to defend poetry against accusations of sorcery or doing the devil's work, and that *The Tempest* relies on and responds to James' hostility to sorcery and his self-presentation as God's lieutenant rooting out magicians who serve the devil? Again, the story I think is more complex than Guenther allows. Stuart Clark describes how theories of mystical monarchy could be shored up by fears of sorcery and witchcraft, whose combat the sovereign claimed as a legitimating duty (*Thinking* 467). But the play's incessantly relativistic aesthetics, its challenging the notion of discernment of spirits, and above all its apparent materialism seem to undermine any fear of witchcraft or demons and indeed to collapse the very distinction between mystical monarch and conjuror Clark describes. The devil never appears in *The Tempest*; he is mentioned by Prospero only in passing as Caliban's supposed father, but all the continuities this implies for Caliban's character are undermined by Caliban's comparatively generous treatment at the end of the play. Every other mention of devils is in the context of misrecognitions of humans, of Ariel, or in relativistic aesthetic judgement: the spirits' manners are better than most men, and some of the nobles are worse than devils, says Prospero (3.3); compared to most men, Ferdinand is like a Caliban compared to an angel (1.2) (suggesting, but not

¹⁹⁸ Leah Marcus's *The Politics of Mirth* is the standard treatment of the literary development of Stuart court defences of country pastimes. Gregory Colón Semenza offers a more recent study extending Marcus's work with a particular focus on sport, with a (for my purposes) productive treatment of the hunt. My argument is not completely compatible with Edward Berry's claim that Prospero's hunt reflects anxiety about James' extension of royal prerogative approaching tyranny in the years around 1610 and linked to humanist hostility towards hunting. The difference may be whether or not hunting is thought of as a cultural activity, sport, or recreation comparable to the masque; if so, both are subject to similar cultural politics, and my argument becomes more plausible.

stating, Caliban's demonism). If Ariel is a material ("airy") spirit that can serve both Sycorax and Prospero, there is no material difference between Sycorax's supposed witchcraft and Prospero's conjuring. Sycorax dies on her own before Prospero's arrival; there is never a confrontation between the two. In adopting, with varying success, Ariel and Caliban, the two relics of Sycorax's reign, and ending the play by freeing Ariel but acknowledging Caliban as his own "thing of darkness," who will "sue for grace," Prospero seems to abandon the Manicheism implicit in the Jacobean politics of demonism that Guenther and Clark describe.

Accordingly, if aesthetic relativism and materialism make the devil distant, the same is true of God. The play's reconciliations are centred instead on a Prospero who is only a partial stand-in for deity. If Ariel's harpy makes a suspiciously naturalistic argument that drives Alonso to despair, Alonso's calming in the presence of Prospero lets him ask forgiveness directly from him as a human being. Prospero embraces his "body" him to show that he is "a living prince," and not a spirit, prompting Alonso's apology:

Who're thou best he or no,
Or some enchanted trifle to abuse me,
As late I have been, I not know. Thy pulse
Beats as of flesh and blood; and since I saw thee,
Th'affliction of my mind amends, with which
I fear a madness held me. This must crave,
An if this be all, a most strange story.
Thy dukedome I resign, and do entreat
Thou pardon me my wrongs. But how should Prospero
Be living, and be here? (5.1.111-119)

In its double stress on the material bodies of Alonso and Prospero both, there is no hint of any appeal to a transcendent judge here, just to the power of Prospero which takes dukeship as its due. Alonso accepts this power without understanding its workings, but only provisionally, reiterating his latter two questions through the rest of the scene. Stephano and Caliban's final words in the play are more definitive, but equally theologically suspect. Stephano fleeing the hounds is converted to an atheistic and unhierarchical universal compassion: "Every man shift for all the rest, and let no man take care for himself, for all is but fortune. Courage, bully-monster, couragio!" Caliban conversely reasserts his polytheism on seeing the Neapolitans: "O Setebos, these be

brave spirits indeed. / How fine my master is ! I am afraid / He will chastise me.” He then reconsiders his false faith in Stephano: “What a thrice-double ass / Was I to take this drunkard for a god, / And worship this dull fool!” (5.1.295-7). Though he agrees to “Seek for grace” in serving him again, is he truly any wiser to take Prospero for a God?¹⁹⁹ Like the most aesthetically instrumental moment Guenther describes, the harpy scene, these three conversions involve theologically suspect claims, or the suppression of important theological problems.

Prospero’s magic is therefore doubly suspicious, not only in its drawing on theological legitimization and theological or magical models,²⁰⁰ but also in the theological dubiety of its ideological content and achievements. As an illusion the audience is privy to, his magic risks undermining the theological legitimacy it structurally relies on, relegating its dogmas to pure aesthetic fictions. Stuart Clark has argued that the Machiavellian understanding of Roman civil religion as a myth imposed by rulers to reinforce their power could undermine belief in witches by presenting them as merely part of the civil mythology (*Thinking* 596ff). When in service to his political ends, Prospero’s morally-oriented illusionism is legible as a similar kind of civil religion that undercuts his implicit claims to mystical monarchy. This intertwining of religion as both the legitimizing model for political power and the aesthetic achievement of political power makes Guenther’s claims of aesthetic inertness very complicated indeed. If the play reflects the seventeenth-century crisis in the older legitimizing political theology and the Blumenbergian re-occupation of the void by poesis that Victoria Kahn has recently argued for (*Future of Illusion*), then aesthetics may become instrumental in very different ways than Guenther’s argument acknowledges. Moreover, the overall thrust of the play seems to make magic or miracle even harder to distinguish from art, not easier. While Guenther stresses the fungibility between magic and poetry through the common medium of powerful language, as is conventional in demonology, in the play the media of

¹⁹⁹ Arguably, Caliban is always confused about the difference between gods and kings. Though Prospero’s art can control Setebos, the murder plot is premised on Prospero being a “sot” without his books.

²⁰⁰ Kahn’s introduction to *The Future of Illusion* makes the useful distinction between theological legitimization of sovereignty and theological modelling of sovereign power on God’s.

relevance are the material processes Ariel participates in. These are quite rich and varied; he cannot touch souls directly, but can do almost anything else matter can including using the exotic properties of sympathy and fascination, etc. Paradoxically, because these properties usually work through the senses, they are materially little different from aesthetics. Therefore, in an important sense beyond the linguistic parallels considered by Guenther, the philosophical difference between magic and art collapses.

But Prospero's civil religion, like Machiavelli's, is not all bad. Kahn describes a number of virtues Machiavelli's analysis imputes to Roman civil religion. While admitting that civil religion is a fiction, Machiavelli distinguishes between good and bad fictions based not on their truth or instrumentality, but on their ability to forge a social unity that is helpful for the republic. These fictions are not arbitrary, but grounded in knowledge of the causes of things, for example through the prudential uses of natural auspices and signs to create apparent miracles. Like Lucretius' view of poetry, knowledge of these causes can both help in myth-making and demystify. For both Machiavelli and Spinoza, civil religion operates at two speeds: the people get the myths they need, while the elite can see through them. Kahn also reads Spinoza and Arendt viewing aesthetic judgement as model for political judgement in the context of civil religion (137-8; 7-10). The educative process of discernment Prospero elicits from Ferdinand and teaches, in some sort, Miranda, therefore can be said to prepare them for politics.²⁰¹

The problem is the play's unwillingness to tidily accept a reading of Prospero's claims as civil religion; this tension is visible particularly in the clash between Alonso's residual desire for explanations and Ferdinand's acceptance of a demystified (or at least exposed) magic as the agent of providence. Alonso's suspicion is natural given his status; despite elite mystifications of the populace, as a prince himself, Alonso should know better, after all. Prospero's repeated deferral of explanations to Alonso is a suppression of the

²⁰¹ Kahn's discussion of Arendt's essay "The Crisis in Culture" implies a similar argument for aesthetic judgement as a model for political judgement (137-8); this is not a judgement based fully on reason or truth but one that still claims consensus; it is not based on objective fact, but on the constructed reality of politics, on history not on nature (7-10). Prospero's civil religion combines many of the attributes Kahn's book brings out.

underlying causes of story; he promises only a “probable” story of the “accidents” at some point in the future, until which Alonso should “be cheerful / And think of each thing well” (5.1.249-51). Probably Prospero desires to conceal his sorcery to avoid Alonso’s James-like hostility, but probably also this is an avoidance of the demystifications Alonso demands. But Alonso’s suspicion is very different from Ferdinand’s simple assertion that “mortal” Miranda is his “by immortal providence” (188-9); Ferdinand of course knows of Prospero’s spirit-magic, but either conceals it from Alonso or simply exceeds Alonso’s capacity for a religious deferral of understanding. Prospero works hard to get Alonso to achieve a similar acceptance, but doesn’t quite succeed. Prospero first recommends “patience” for the loss of Ferdinand (140), claiming to have suffered equally with the loss of his daughter, then rapidly reveals Ferdinand and Miranda in the cave. The claim of fellow-suffering may be an attempt to bring Alonso on side (witness its efficacy in bonding Miranda and Ferdinand), but the briefness of this test for “patience” suggests its triviality.²⁰² The sequence of revelations following meet only with further demands for explanations from Alonso – wonders, or the aesthetic experience of wonder itself, will not satisfy him. Gonzalo’s providential conclusion that “all of us [found] ourselves / when no man was his own” plainly doesn’t satisfy Alonso.

I want to conclude this section by suggesting that demonology itself may help reconcile the tension between reading Prospero as a Machiavellian practitioner of civil religion and a mystical monarch expunging demons. There are demonological reasons to “think well” of Prospero, which the play seeds from its very beginning, and may provide theological grounds to redeem his illusions from charges of Machiavellian deception. Prospero’s first words in the play are to claim that he has done “no harm.” The traditional English definition of witchcraft relied on the ability to cause harm or *maleficium*; it was only in

²⁰² Alonso arguably has already suffered extensively; as a sovereign, his suffering is demanded for the sake of reconciliation (cp. Beckwith). The precise quantification of suffering and its form in emotional or material loss is one of the play’s preoccupations; Prospero must also suffer a vulnerability at the end of the play. The antinomian implications of unmerited grace find a counterpoint in the contractual faith of covenant theology, of which suffering, even of a token kind, is a necessary performance counterbalancing the Neapolitan demand for pleasurable aesthetic supplementation discussed in section 6.

1604 that the laws changed to make a contract with the devil itself a crime, and Keith Thomas has argued that this change had little effect; the laws also distinguished between covenants with good and bad spirits (Thomas 517ff). Prospero has some sort of contractual arrangement with Ariel, but none apparently with the devil. James may have been responsible for introducing the continental notion of the witch's compact to Scotland (Clark, "King James" 157), but his *Daemonologie* also offered further mitigations that apply to Prospero, distinguishing between witches and the less harmful sorcerers on the grounds that witches are driven by a desire to revenge, sorcerers for a desire for knowledge; this distinction seems to partly categorize Sycorax and Prospero. Prospero seems on the verge of revenge when Alonso is in his power, but his decision to display mercy, at Ariel's urging no less, seems to exonerate him in this sense of witchcraft. Finally, given Prospero's failure to cause serious material harm, we might read his magic in the line of Protestant, particularly Lutheran, theologians, who tended to minimize the threat of material harm caused by witchcraft and instead stress the experience of bewitching as a trial of conscience licensed by God (Clark, *Thinking* ch. 30). Sufferers were advised to trust in God's providence. Prospero's "trials" and imitations of theodicy put him in this lineage; he seems no worse than Job's devil, indeed a lot gentler. Prospero's illusionism in the latter half of the play is therefore interpretable as a different form of divine lieutenancy, one that produces crises of conscience in order to prompt spiritual and moral reform. If in doing so his illusions resemble the devil's, like Ariel's material nature as an airy spirit, his material humanity reduces the cognitive dissonance of this resemblance.

In other words, while Alonso wants answers, Prospero will only provide experiences and mysteries. This understanding of the monarch as an imposer of spiritual trials is very different from a monarch whose ecclesiastical role is to guarantee the delivery of correct doctrine or even to edify his subjects in a broader sense, two roles I argued were considered for state-licensed theatre in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In some ways this understanding gives the monarch a more intensely spiritual role, but from another perspective the crafting of appropriate trials seems threateningly arbitrary and artificial. As I have argued of *The Duchess of Malfi*, *The Tempest* should also be read in the

context of the “new humanism” Richard Tuck has described, which developed (like Lipsius and Montaigne) rationales for the Machiavellian subordination of religion to prudential politics to deal with a Pyrrhonist crisis of ethics that demanded above all the preservation of self and state. But by representing the strategic use of demonological illusions, *The Tempest* also provides evidence for Stuart Clark’s development of Tuck’s claims by linking ethical Pyrrhonism to visual Pyrrhonism, particularly in the domain of religious apparitions (Clark, *Vanities* 266-294). The eventual philosophical solution for the problem of visual trustworthiness was Descartes’ argument that the senses were not created by God merely for the purposes of misleading human beings, and therefore could be trusted – if not as providing resemblances of the exterior world, as providing conventional signs causally related to an exterior reality (Clark, *Vanities* 320ff.) This is in effect a providential argument authorizing Cartesian epistemology at a very local scale, enabling Descartes to argue his way out of his provocative worst-case scenario, that of a demon tricking all his senses.

I will argue in the rest of this chapter that the play presents a related but slightly different solution to the excess facticity of its spiritual theatre, expanding its providential arguments about the discernment of spirits to develop covenantal arguments located more immediately in political and ethical circumstances than in metaphysical or epistemological argument (the eschewal of metaphysics will be very important for the end of the argument). Rather than beginning from the void and *cogito* like Descartes, *The Tempest* argues for a gradually and historically changing grounding of covenantal certainty about the natural and human world. It does so first by accepting the coexistence of a variety of aesthetic sophistications and providing aesthetic surrogates for spiritual experiences suiting them all, using a common scriptural pattern as a criterion of discernment (section 8); secondly, by limiting the claims to allegiance, particularly the temporal ones, it demands of its subjects, preserving a domain of voluntarism for the subject (section 9); thirdly, by presenting a view of nature and of politics as covenantal orders not arbitrarily violable but rather subject to aesthetic or linguistic accommodation (section 10). The aesthetic surrogates of spiritual experiences are concrete covenantal

performances of a broader and less accessible providence, but the certainty and satisfaction they provide is temporally limited and epistemically provisional.

8 Innocence and anaesthesia: the varieties of spiritual experience and the sign of Jonah

Besides acting as an idealized model for the endurance of suffering in the play, Ferdinand and Miranda's marriage also acts as a model for reciprocity between people of differing levels of aesthetic sophistication. Ferdinand and Miranda's love is indeed love at first sight, premised on little more than appearances; as Ferdinand confesses, "The very instant that I saw you did / My heart fly to your service" (3.1.64-5). But their ability to judge these appearances is a complicated mismatch between innocence and experience. Ferdinand's reasoning is the first hint of the complexity of this aesthetic problem:

Full many a lady
I have eyed with best regard, and many a time
Th' harmony of their tongues hath into bondage
Brought my too diligent ear. For several virtues
Have I liked several women, never any
With so full soul but some defect in her
Did quarrel with the noblest grace she owed,
And put it to th' foil. But you, O you,
So perfect and so peerless, are created
Of every creature's best. (3.1.39-48)

Having been entranced visually and aurally before, Ferdinand suggests that his prior moments of seduction were aesthetic "bondages" brought on by aesthetic complexity demanding intense "best regard" or "diligent" listening, in order to discern either the harmony of mixed tones, or mixture of virtues and defects creating the conventional aesthetic effect of "foil" behind a gemstone. Though Orgel's edition argues against prior editorial convention citing this meaning of foil, instead favouring a sense of overthrowing or a fencing match as "quarrel" suggests, Ferdinand seems to pun on both meanings. The point is that the very perfection of Miranda renders redundant any of these complex aesthetic effects. In this way, Ferdinand's prior erotic/aesthetic experience becomes totally irrelevant in his match; Ferdinand's judgement of Miranda is

instantaneous. This aesthetic simplicity corresponds to Ferdinand's spiritual numbness at the end of 1.2, and his later kenotic self-abasement; the "full soul" of his love moves his heart to her service, prompting the subsequent mortification or insensitivity of his wooden slavery. In Ferdinand the an-aesthetic is intertwined with the anaesthetic, correlated in a way that makes cause and effect indistinguishable.

Miranda, in what may seem to be a more obvious way, also avoids comparisons. She responds to Ferdinand that she has little to compare herself or Ferdinand with:

I do not know
One of my sex, no woman's face remember,
Save from my glass, mine own; nor have I seen
More than I may call men than you, good friend,
And my dear father. (3.1.48-52)

Though Miranda has earlier told Prospero that she remembers "four or five women once that tended me" (1.2.46), she seems not to remember their faces. Moreover, she refrains from including Caliban in her list of men, implicitly rejecting Prospero's earlier comparison denigrating Ferdinand:

Thou think's there is no more such shapes as he,
Having seen but him and Caliban. Foolish wench,
To th'most of men this is a Caliban,
And they to him are angels. (1.2.479-482)

Miranda then explicitly rejected comparison, claiming "my affections / are then most humble. I have no ambition / to see a goodlier man" (1.2.482-4). She does so again here, both by not bothering to compare Ferdinand to Prospero, and by adapting Ferdinand's jewel figure into a negative aesthetic:

How features are abroad
I am skillless of; but by my modesty,
The jewel in my dower, I would not wish
Any companion in the world but you;
Nor can imagination form a shape
Besides yourself to like of. (3.1.52-57)

Modesty, the aesthetic version of humility, becomes her jewel, and she refrains from the imaginative work of constructing a prettier husband. For comparison, Miranda's

imaginative modesty is also entirely different from Caliban's naive exaggeration when he tempts Stephano with Miranda's praises:

And that most deeply to consider is
The beauty of his daughter. He himself
Calls her a nonpareil. I never saw a woman
But only Sycorax, my dam, and she;
But she as far surpasseth Sycorax
As greatest does least. (3.2.96-101)

Though my critical method here is comparison, Ferdinand and Miranda reject it.

Yet in another important way, Miranda is not as innocent as she admits to Ferdinand. Her memory of her serving women may indeed be vague, and her suppression of Caliban as a comparator may perhaps make sense; but whereas Ferdinand knows nothing about her and her father's true identities, she knows exactly who he is and how he may be implicated in his father's sins. Yet she puts aside her greater moral knowledge of his circumstances. Her claim to put aside "bashful cunning" in favour of "plain and holy innocence" (3.1.81-82) is the moral equivalent of Ferdinand's rejection of his aesthetic experience.

Prospero finds much to praise in this an-aesthetic negotiation; his aside, "fair encounter / Of two most rare affections!" suggests that what Miranda called "humble" affections are something else indeed, not only unusual but rarefied or refined, so much so that they appear to exceed calculation. Again, in doing so, the an-aesthetic itself becomes anaesthetic. None of the explanations for his labour Ferdinand begins the scene by considering are adequate:

There be some sports are painful, and their labour
Delight in them set off; some kinds of baseness
Are nobly undergone; and most poor matters
Point to rich ends. This my mean task
Would be as heavy to me, as odious, but
The mistress which I serve quickens what's dead
And makes my labours pleasures. O, she is
Ten times more gentle than her father's crabbed,
And he's composed of harshness. (3.1.1-9)

His work is not a delightful sport, not a descent undergone for noble purposes, and not instrumentally endured. If she “quickens” the mortification of his labour, through some form of essential gentleness (and it is here that comparatives creep into Ferdinand’s language, indicative of another error of judgement), there is no question of struggling to discern it. It simply is. In this the play seems to support Susan Schreiner’s recent argument that certainty itself often became the criterion of valid spiritual experience. Ferdinand’s bondage of aesthetic discernment is released in marriage; “with a heart as willing / As bondage e’er of freedom” (3.1.88-89), he gives her his hand.

Ferdinand and Miranda thus are able to bridge the gap of their different aesthetic sophistications by renouncing comparisons or the activity of discernment. This is very different from *Midsummer*, in which differences in aesthetic sensibility created or reinforced social divisions. Miranda and Ferdinand both find what they need in each other, voluntarily announcing their service; their marriage contract is a model for other contractual relations in the play between people of different sophistications. None are as successful as this marriage contract.

But like Ferdinand’s opening comparison between Miranda’s gentleness and Prospero’s harshness, the scene ends with another accommodation of different aesthetic sophistications. Prospero’s conclusion does not renounce their judgement, but admits a relativity of affect:

So glad of this as they I cannot be,
Who are surprised withal, but my rejoicing
At nothing can be more. I’ll to my book,
For yet ere supertime must I perform
Much business appertaining. (3.1.92-4)

His greater understanding of events means that Prospero cannot feel the sensation of surprise, the wonder he attempts to manipulate Alonso with. But this is still the best result he could imagine. The events he must “perform” include the obligatory wedding masque; in this way the contract between Ferdinand and Miranda becomes part of a larger contractual scheme, again between agents of differing aesthetic sophistications with full knowledge of their differences: Prospero has his art, Ferdinand discerns his

spirits, and Miranda has partial prior knowledge of both men. In this performance Ferdinand's perception of Prospero's spirits transforms from the devils he allegedly feared on the ship ("Hell is empty and all the devils here" (1.2.214-15) to the source of inert pleasure of the spirits in the masque; this transformation culminates in the reappearance of Alonso and Ferdinand's claim that "though the seas threaten, they are merciful. / I have cursed them without cause" (5.1.178-9), a redemption of providence if there ever was one.

The marriage of Ferdinand and Miranda, which in turn transforms the relationship between Ferdinand and Prospero, is therefore one way that the play disarms cynical interpretations of civil religion. Ferdinand graduates not to a level of equality with Prospero, but to one in which he, like Miranda before him, is at least partly aware of his different aesthetic capacities, but still able to freely participate in the bondage of obligation. In this way the aesthetic belittlements other characters use to assert their sophistication can become a form of hubris, to which a self-aware innocence is preferable. For example, Antonio and Sebastian's objections to Gonzalo and Adrian's positive judgements of the smell and greenness of the island; or Antonio's objection to Gonzalo's phrase "Widow Dido," whose complaint is to the clashing of terms – both the homely "widow" applied to the mythological queen, and the aural awkwardness of the phrase, as in his subsequent "O, widow Dido? Ay widow Dido" (2.1.76, 99). Indeed the making of these distinctions can be worse than Ferdinand's aesthetic bondage; it can itself become a form of deadening, like the rotting of the blowfly Ferdinand envisions. His figure of wormy maggots, a form of spontaneous generation, seems to be counterpoised to more overtly providential forms of continuity, among them Ferdinand's figure of resurrection, the arranged marriage and its anticipated offspring.²⁰³ Worrying out the action of providence can be destructive: "Do not infest your mind with beating on / The strangeness of this business," Prospero warns Alonso (5.1.246). But in some cases infestation - like Ferdinand's – is a positive figure: Miranda's offer to labour with

²⁰³ cp. Amanda Bailey's recent discussion of "Hamlet's Worms," which she argues figure a spontaneous form of continuity opposed to both inherited and electoral forms of political continuity in *Hamlet*. The materialist problem of resurrection in the body given wormy decay is sidestepped here.

Ferdinand prompts Prospero's aside, "poor worm, thou art infected!" (3.1.3.2). The distinction here is between the baiting Prospero intends, a desirable form of infestation of Ferdinand, and Miranda's reciprocal love-sickness or infection; both will bear desirable fruit.

The play therefore presents a paradox in which challenging aesthetic experiences, verging on infection, can be both livening and deadening, both ennobling and debasing; this regardless of whether the experience is a pleasurable or a painful one. The most intense, like Ferdinand's, exceed the ability of pleasure and pain to be distinguished, and abandoning this distinction is necessary for the spiritual consolations available, whether providential or otherwise. Like Ferdinand's sense of kenosis and mortification followed by quickening into a relationship (marriage) of free bondage, others experience the revelations of the last act as forms of rebirth into relations of free service. I want to suggest that Ferdinand's experience in this becomes way a spiritual paradigm for the rest of the play. David Evett has identified the liturgical and scriptural origins of the pattern of free service in the play, but I would modify his account by stressing that the pattern of rebirth preceding it seems to draw on the ultimate paradigm for spiritual discernment provided in the gospels by Jesus. Jesus responds to the Pharisees' demand for signs proving that he is not working by means of demons with only the promise of the "sign of Jonah," identifying Jonah's sojourn in the whale with his own three days in the tomb, identified in later tradition with the harrowing of hell (Mt. 12:24ff; Lk. 29ff). This sign has an obvious resonance with the shipwreck motif of the play, and later Christ compares the sign of Jonah to sailors' forecasting of the weather, evoking Trinculo's fear of storm clouds later (Mt. 16:1-4). This pattern of rebirth into a bondage that feels like freedom structures the last act of the play, and suggests that the sign of Jonah is a pattern of experience that ultimately legitimates Prospero's magic.

For example, Gonzalo's claim that "all of us [found] ourselves / When no man was his own" (5.1.212-13), usually glossed as coming to one's senses (a form of discernment), comes at the tail of a series of political and marital examples:

In one voyage
Did Claribel her husband find at Tunis,

And Ferdinand, her brother, found a wife
 Where he himself was lost, Prospero his dukedom
 In a poor isle, and all of us ourselves
 When no man was his own. (5.1.208-213)

In context, this sense of finding oneself despite or because of an abandonment to a higher power mimics Ferdinand's marital kenosis and liberty in bondage. The Boatswain's return also fits this pattern. Gonzalo observes that his return fulfills his prophecy but finds him spiritually transformed or at least no longer blasphemous; deferentially praising the king he previously was indifferent to, the boatswain rejoices that "The best news is that we have safely found / Our king and company" (221-2). Again, this transformation was achieved through a death-like experience followed by rebirth:

We were dead of sleep,
 And – how we know not – all clapped under hatches,
 Where but even now with strange and several noises
 Of roaring, shrieking, howling, jingling chains,
 And more diversity of sounds, all horrible,
 We were awaked, straitaway at liberty,
 Where we, in all our trim, freshly beheld
 Our royal, good, and gallant ship; our master
 Cap'ring to eye her – (5.1.230-8)

While not without suffering, the strange and horrible noises, mimicking the terrors of the grave or imprisonment of hell à la Christ's harrowing, are a brief instant, quickly replaced by a renewal which is an awakening into a liberty which is itself defined as a renewal of the prior social order, ropes and master all.

The boatswain still can't believe his eyes, and considers himself to be still dreaming. If these rebirths suggest a spiritual experience or conversion that transvalues bondage into liberty, Trinculo and Stephano's transformations are more tentative, remaining in the intermediate state of anaesthesia. But given Ferdinand's marriage's suggestions of kenosis, Christological patterns of rebirth also resonate through these other revelations. Gonzalo's suggestions of marriage and kingdoms evoke the mystical marriage and its redemptions; the boatswain's dream the harrowing of hell; and Trinculo and Stephano suggest Christ's own burial, corpse-ly embalming in spices, and transient resurrection on earth. Trinculo, "reeling-ripe" explains to Alonso that he has "been in such a pickle since

I saw you last that I fear me will never out of my bones. I shall not fear fly blowing” (5.1.282-4), and Stephano adds, “O, touch me not; I am not Stephano, but a cramp” (5.1.286). Their partial awakenings are transient preservatives, like the embalming of Jesus’ body, or his *noli me tangere* (John 20:17) after resurrection (and his cramp suggests Christ’s wounds and later proofs of identity). Caliban alone among the conspirators moves beyond anaesthesia, feeling fully awake when he resumes his service of Prospero, on the simple terms of cleaning his chamber to receive his pardon. If Caliban experiences a revelation, it is of his own foolishness in serving Stephano, and in agreeing to “seek grace” through service.

To summarize, successful (providential) political reincorporation, however partial, is marked by the play as an *experiential* approximation to the sign of Jonah, which is not a Pharisaically demanded angelic or demonic sign, but the resurrection after suffering of the human Christ. The criterion of discernment is not obtainable by mere aesthetic study or imaginative practice, but rather through the renewal of a contract of willing service which the kenotic approximations of Christ and similar aesthetic experiences enable.²⁰⁴ David Evett has discussed the relevance of this trope of willing service in the play and its cultural currency, suggesting the tendency to identify the “perfect liberty” of God’s service with other forms of service (stretching, as in the play, across social classes), and identifying it as the imitation of Christ. As Evett observes, the main Pauline locus for free service is Galatians’ discussion of the new covenant. I wish to stress that there Paul provides a variety of metaphors for covenantal change from law to spirit which are evocative of the play’s many maturations within contracts: maturing out of the need for a schoolteacher as Miranda does, a servant being adopted as a son like Ferdinand, or the distinction between the the children of Sarah and Hagar, the latter perhaps reflecting Caliban’s fate. This suggests that the spiritual and aesthetic experiences of the characters in the play may ultimately be analyzed through a particular understanding of covenantal theology.

²⁰⁴ This pattern is evocative of the Ignatian spiritual exercises, imaginative identifications with Christ’s life and passion whose purpose was partly the development of spiritual discernment (Schreiner ch. 6). See Waddell for an argument for Ignatian meditation’s relation to Jesuit science.

9 Sex and apocalypse: temporal limitation

The last act of the play, then, piles up a variety of spiritual experiences approximating the linear, sequential stages of redemption but varying in their imitative proximity to the person of Christ. Gonzalo, the Boatswain, Stephano, and Trinculo all participate in progressively less spiritual ways in this redemption; Caliban in possibly the most material way, starting from anew in humble service. The play's overall adherence to a linear, Aristotelian time scheme, emphasized by Prospero's own obsession with the timing necessary to complete his plot, frames this subjective relativity of spiritual experience. If Ferdinand's experience is again taken as the ideal, the subplot characters are distinguished not by the different sequence of their spiritual maturations, but by their lack of patience, the word the play repeatedly uses for the Christian and providential endurance of suffering but which also marks the need for accurate timing. But like Caliban's renewal of service, the play suggests that these stages of redemption can be restarted after failure, and that redemption is always possible because it is, in life, always deferred.

This deferral mitigates a sense of closure even in Ferdinand's case. Ferdinand performs his spiritual maturity before the masque not only by asserting an an-aesthetic inertness, but by conditioning this inertness on the anticipation of deferred pleasure, an anticipation which itself becomes more pleasurable than the immediate charms of the masque, or, for that matter, of his wife:

As I hope
For quiet days, fair issue, and long life,
With such love as 'tis now, the murkiest den,
The most opportune place, the strongest suggestion
Our worser genius can, shall never melt
Mine honour into lust, to take away
The edge of that day's celebration
When I shall think or Phoebus's steeds are foundered,
Or night kept chained below. (4.1.23-31)

This deferral of consummation comes in response to Prospero's anticipatory curse that "barren hate / Sour-eyed disdain, and discord shall bestrew / The union of your bed with weeds so loathly / That you shall hate it both" (4.1.19-22), if Ferdinand "break[s]

[Miranda's] virgin-knot before / All sanctimonious ceremonies may / With full and holy rite be ministered" (4.1.15-17). The aesthetic pleasures of patience, the "edge" of the wedding day, outweigh not only the ugliness of sex Prospero counterposes as punishment for impatience, but also the eventual satisfactions of sex. Ferdinand seems to interpret the role of wedding ritual, possibly including the holy rite, as a pleasure-amplifying deferral.

There are two important features to notice here. First, in comparison to the potentially causal role of ritual in *Midsummer*, marriage ritual here seems to act almost purely in an aesthetic register. Despite Prospero's arrangement of Miranda's marriage the play seems to frame the ritual deferral as having no metaphysical purpose other than to secure the accomplishment of pleasure and consent. This is a striking contrast with the lunar delays of *Midsummer* which were meant (however unreliably) to guarantee fertility. Moreover, against *Midsummer*'s fairy blessing of the beds, Prospero makes no direct attempt to magically manipulate Miranda's fertility; this is a striking contrast to Caliban's rape attempt, Antonio and Sebastian's claims to manipulate the moon, and Sycorax's ability to "control the moon, make flows and ebbs, / And deal in her command without her power." *The Tempest*'s only explicit blessings for fertility (Ceres's and Juno's) are even buried within in the contrived aesthetic device of the masque.

Second, the play's limitation of marriage ritual to the aesthetic seems inseparable from the temporal limitations it places on its treatment of fertility. *Midsummer*'s blessing of the bed attempted (again unreliably) to guarantee the fate of the children resulting from the marriage. Ferdinand's emphasis instead is entirely on the married couple's happiness, considering their "fair issue" only insofar as they are an attribute of this happiness; this limited acknowledgement of their future children allows them to be independent beings rather than ones whose fate can be predetermined. Juno's marriage blessing in the masque is similarly circumscribed by a strongly imminent ("hourly") temporal stress:

Honour, riches, marriage-blessing,
Long continuance, and increasing,
Hourly joys be still upon you! (4.1.106-8)

While Ceres' subsequent wish, after her wish for fertile harvests, that "Spring come to you at the farthest / In the very end of harvest!" (4.1.114-5) suggests the exceeding of

these bounds in near miraculous ways, the natural timing of the human life-cycle dominates the play. A generic example is the play's frequent reference to the pulse. Sometimes these limits are liberating – as in Antonio's suspect argument that Claribel dwells "ten leagues beyond man's life" and can send "no note unless the sun were post – / The man i' th' moon's too slow – till newborn chins / Be rough and razorable" (2.1.245-48). In other ways these limits are constraining; Miranda's maturation, particularly her sexual maturation, is one of the pressures on Prospero's plot. Similarly, Prospero's mortality implies a necessary succession in rule, a transition of power which contrasts with Caliban's dream of peopling the island with Calibans, clones of himself. Prospero seems to accept a limitation of sovereign power at the limit of the human lifespan or generation. Sovereignty's temporal claims are local, its contracts like the marriage central to the play, in some ways freely entered and voluntary.

This means also that sovereignty's provisions are temporary. Iris introduces the masque's dancers, "sun-burned sicklemen, of August weary" and "naiads of the windring brooks," presenting the dance as a refreshing recreation or "holiday" (4.1.134-6) for the laborers, participating in Jacobean defences of country mirth (Marcus). But as an obligation due to Ferdinand and Miranda, also wearied from their labour, this reward is less effective and transient. Iris by her nature cannot fulfill the blessing of Ceres for winter-free living; as a biblical emblem for the covenant made with Noah, to never again destroy the world with a flood, the rainbow is a sign of natural perpetuity. But this perpetuity is also violated by the masque's strikingly apocalyptic interruption. If the dance is an aesthetic consolation whose pleasures refresh after labour and distract from the impending winter, Prospero's revels speech acts very differently. Prospero elevates the aesthetic to an ontological principle, which elevation itself acts as a consolation for material limitations and mortality:

You do look, my son, in a moved sort,
As if you were dismayed. Be cheerful, sir;
Our revels now are ended. These our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits, and
Are melted into air, into thin air,
And like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,

The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
 Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
 And like this insubstantial pageant faded,
 Leave not a rack behind. (4.1.146-156)

Prospero strikingly begins by framing the ending of the revels as itself a source of cheer. Why this is so is initially unclear, especially when Prospero goes on to identify this ending with the apocalyptic dissolution of not only all civil and religious institutions but also the world and all which “inherit” it, a violation of the Noahide covenant the rainbow signified between God and “all flesh that is upon the earth” (Gen 9:17) (a phrase Genesis repeats for emphasis.) This dissolution is at first disturbing. But Prospero continues by redefining those inheritors’ substance away from the flesh, in the play’s most famous sentence: “We are such stuff / As dreams are made on, and our little life / Is rounded with a sleep” (4.1.156-8). Drawing on the Christian covenant’s apocalypticism to supersede the Noahide one, as well as the Mosaic one, Prospero’s simultaneously redefines both the world and the participants in the covenant. There are several sources of consolation in this speech, then, not to mention the more cynical sense that Ferdinand as Prospero’s son will inherit soon, which Prospero’s age (the “infirmity” and “old brain” he subsequently mentions) suggest. But the emphasis is not on this practical mortality, nor on the eschatological Christian implications, but rather in the capacity for redefinition, in the freedom to create, that dissolution implies.

10 Prospero and Caliban at Gibeon: contractual accommodation and the new covenant of materialism

In other words, Ferdinand and Miranda go one step further than the other characters in their experiences of revelation; in the revels speech they obtain an apocalyptic window into transience, into the constructed and limited nature of all things. This understanding has implications for the beginning, ending, and ongoing adjustment of contracts, for which their marriage is a paradigm. Ferdinand’s labour began as a compulsion but ended up being voluntary, with Ferdinand only coming to discern all the relevant facts – for example, Prospero’s spirits – after the marriage was already consented to. Ferdinand and Miranda’s banter when exposed playing chess reveals that they’ve internalized this flexible understanding of contracts:

Miranda: Sweet lord, you play me false.
 Ferdinand: No, my dearest love,
 I would not for the world.
 Miranda: Yes, for a score of kingdoms you should wrangle,
 And I would call it fair play. (5.1.172-4)

The rules of the game of chess, a traditional model for statecraft, may be violated, but Miranda gives her permission. There is in the banter a misunderstanding; what Ferdinand takes to be a comment on their marriage, Miranda translates into politics. It is less likely that Miranda means (even as a joke) that she will tolerate infidelity by Ferdinand for political gain than that she's simply encouraging Ferdinand to take a reason-of-state approach to government. In a manner analogous to the wordplay of their first encounter, this emblematic moment of misunderstanding renders marriage contracts and political contracts conceptually interchangeable. But the particular point seems to be that Miranda advises a complex sense of detachment, the study of the board from above, while simultaneously indulging in a love that justifies rule-breaking. Miranda is teaching Ferdinand by revising Prospero's instructions to her at the beginning of 1.2, that the storm, however violable of apparent norms of nature and justice, was for her sake somehow justified. Whereas then she begged for a miracle out of a sense of universal compassion, she now licenses cheating by appealing to particularist love. For from being a commodity of marriage herself, Miranda's indulgence in permissiveness is not the converse, an instrumental alienation of Ferdinand as a commodity; rather she is licensing an exception, not as a Schmittian sovereign but as a (conventionally subordinate) marriage partner. In this sense false play is transformed from arbitrary sovereignty into fidelity to a different and more flexible set of rules; the marriage contract justifies political cheating.

As usual, the political and the affective are tightly interlinked in Ferdinand and Miranda's wrangling, and no wonder, since Prospero has introduced them to Alonso as a "wonder to content ye / As much as me my dukedom" (5.1.170-1), presenting the two spheres as fungible. But the response of others to this moment of re-encounter moves toward the ontological or metaphysical, moving backward towards Miranda's opening desire for a miracle. Sebastian calls their appearance simply "a most high miracle"

(5.1.177). Ferdinand interprets the appearance of Alonso as a sign of cosmic mercy:

“Though the seas threaten, they are merciful. / I have cursed them without cause”

(5.1.177-8). Miranda generalizes even more broadly from the appearance of the nobles to the redemption of the world, in her most famous lines:

O wonder!
How many goodly creatures are there here!
How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world
That has such people in't! (5.1.181-4)

If Miranda can see the world anew because of the courtiers' “goodly” appearance, it is only because she is ignorant of their often ugly, if not evil, substance. As Prospero cautions simply, “’tis new to thee” (5.1.184).

I want to conclude by arguing that the play follows through on these hints by inviting the consideration of a new world in an ontological register – a new covenant of materialism. Between Noah's flood and the apocalypse to come is the play's bipartite renunciation of magic, Prospero's drowning of his book and burial of his staff, and Ariel's return to nature. By framing these renunciations in the Galilean moment, I will argue that when translated into ontological terms, Miranda's false play called fair becomes less a question of a permissive attitude to miracles or conjuring – metaphysical forms of cheating – than a reassessment of the rules of the game. Rather than an entirely new beginning, this new understanding of the world should be seen as an accommodation of a pre-existing covenant, a revelation of terms previously poorly understood, and now newly, more-or-less freely, consented to.

The way to this argument, as always when materialist or metaphysical grounding comes to the forefront in the play, is again through the moon. The relevant biblical text bridging metaphysics and politics is the story of the Gibeonites treated in Joshua 9 and 10. Joshua 10's claim that during the Israelite defense of Gibeon God held the sun and the moon still at Joshua's command was frequently cited as a proof-text against the Copernicanism suggested by Galileo's observations; if the sun usually moved, it couldn't be the centre of the universe. But more broadly, the story of the Gibeonites was often cited in discussions of kings' obligations to keep promises, against Machiavellian or reason-of-state

counterarguments (Kahn, *Wayward* 37, 105). In Joshua 9 the Gibeonites obtained an alliance with the Israelites under the false pretenses of being foreign to the Promised Land, which the Israelites later upheld though they punitively made the Gibeonites servants, hewers of wood and bearers of water. The subsequent Israelite defense of Gibeon against the assaults of five Canaanite kings established the Israelite fidelity to their alliance, a fidelity which God's miracle helped license and God's participation in the battle ensured. Joshua's control over the sun and moon, framed as a theurgical manipulation of divine powers, was held to be an exceptional event: "And there was no day like that before it, nor after it, that the Lord heard the voice of a man: for the Lord fought for Israel" (Joshua 10:14).

The miracle of Joshua's magic, the temporary violation of the natural order established since Genesis, is ultimately the characterisation of his magic Prospero provides for us. The book of Jeremiah rhetorically conditions God's covenant on the regularity of nature, specifically the regular sequence of days and nights, which Jeremiah calls God's covenant with day and with night (Jer 31:35; 33:20-25). But at Gibeon the covenant of the day and night was abrogated for the sake of the covenant with Israel, or more precisely, what seems even more surprising, for the sake of the subsidiary covenant between Israel and the Gibeonites. Prospero's list of major miracles include the sun and Sycorax's the moon, together suggesting (though not replicating) the miracle at Gibeon,²⁰⁵ but unlike Sycorax's unmotivated power, Prospero describes his most dramatic magic as theurgical violations of nature phrased as the temporary usurpation of divine power:

I have bedimm'd
The noontide sun, call'd forth the mutinous winds,
And 'twixt the green sea and the azured vault
Set roaring war: to the dread rattling thunder
Have I given fire and rifted Jove's stout oak
With his own bolt; the strong-based promontory

²⁰⁵ That Prospero and Sycorax's magic involves dimming the sun and usurping the power of the moon – rather than stopping their motion – distinguishes them from Joshua's miracle, preserving its unambiguous exceptionality.

Have I made shake and by the spurs pluck'd up
 The pine and cedar: graves at my command
 Have waked their sleepers, oped, and let 'em forth
 By my so potent art. (5.1.41-50)

But though based on Medea's speech *summoning* powers in Book 7 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Shakespeare adds the language of mutiny and usurpation only to couple it to Prospero's promise to "*abjure*" this "rough magic" (51). If Sycorax is a Medean witch, Prospero's usurpation is legitimated at the moment of confession by being framed as already temporary. Moreover, like Joshua's exceptional miracle, which permitted the Israelites to keep their promises, even one made in error to a servant and deceitful people, Prospero's magic may be similarly justifiable to the extent that it creates, or re-establishes, a sphere of covenantal politics after Prospero's initial mistake of trusting his brother.

Within the play's providential frame these miracles are legible as the temporary violation of general providence by special providences. The cosmic distortions of sea storms and earthquakes that Prospero disturbingly claims as his own work evoke the miraculism of Calvin or Faustus, but only as temporary disturbances, not as a permanent transformations. In contrast, Ariel's lyric celebration of his return to nature instead envisions a return to a general providence very much like that of the fairies of *Midsummer*:

Where the bee sucks, there suck I
 In a cowslip's bell I lie;
 There I couch when owls do cry;
 On the bat's back I do fly
 After summer merrily.
 Merrily, merrily shall I live now
 Under the blossom that hangs on the bough. (5.1.88-94)

As in my discussion of *Midsummer* in chapter 1, there are hints here of the general ambivalence of the natural world reflecting Hooker's understanding of providence: for example, the cowslips which I argued were crucial to that play's understanding of nature as a providential domain, or the ambivalent mixture of cloying bees and frightening owls and bats, of day and night, summer and winter. But the ambivalent order of general

providence, which includes the “after summer” Prospero’s wedding masque tries to suppress, is here identified with Ariel’s liberty; the dramatic trick of making Ariel a magician’s servant means that natural order, not its dramatic violation by magic or miracle, here feels like freedom.²⁰⁶

But the play’s covenantalism doesn’t appeal to the story of Gibeon only to model the temporary abrogation of one covenantal order to satisfy another. The standard rebuttal to the anti-Copernican citation of the miracle at Gibeon was that the Bible was an accommodation to its readers’ intellectual and linguistic capacities, and that the description of the moving or stopping sun and moon was a mere linguistic convenience. If there is a single leitmotif in Caliban’s education, it is his changing understanding of the moon, an understanding that, like Galileo’s observations, involves both its appearance and its power, but is also linguistic. The son of a witch who can “control the moon, make flows and ebbs, / And deal in her command without her power” (5.1.271), Caliban has to be taught by Prospero “how / To name the bigger light and how the less / That burn by day and night” (1.2.334-6) as part of his instruction in language; he later claims to Stephano that Miranda has taught him about the man in the moon, who he takes Stephano to be, but later learns to reject his claims to possess the moon’s spiritual powers. Because Caliban’s “bigger light” mangles the Geneva Bible’s “greater light” (Gen. 1:16) (Orgel ed. n.1.2.335), Caliban’s changing understanding of the moon is linguistically aligned with arguments for biblical accommodation broader than the example of Gibeon alone. If Caliban, as Miranda alleges, did not know his purpose or meaning until she endowed him with words to make them known (1.2.355), Caliban’s changing relationship with Prospero’s family can also be thought of as a process of repeated contractual accommodation adjusting its terms to his verbal maturation and accompanying understanding of the universe, particularly the moon. His punishment of being a servant, often collecting firewood, suggests the Gibeonite hewers of wood and

²⁰⁶ Prospero’s renunciation speech, like Medea’s, also begins with an invocation of “elves,” like *Midsummer*’s fairies, weak powers enabling dramatic miracles. That fairy magic appears suddenly in these speeches begins the return to a naturalism its dramatic illusions tended to overshadow.

drawers of water, as Michael Neill has observed (40-41);²⁰⁷ both are demoted from full allies to subordinates, though still possessing certain claims on their masters. Caliban's ultimate acknowledgement and renewal of his employment contract is like the Gibeonites' also in that it makes room for genealogical difference; it is part of the play's broader movement to a particular kind of materialist renewal that disavows reductive essentialism, acknowledging a "thing of darkness" (5.1.275), a "demi-devil" (5.1.272) and "bastard" (5.1.273), by offering a pardon conditional on nothing more material than a trivial contractual performance, the simple task of cleaning Prospero's cave.

Together, then, Ariel and Caliban model two different versions of covenantal accommodation that are more starkly outlined than the negotiations between Ferdinand and Miranda: Ariel's contract is repeatedly renegotiated to serve the exigencies of Prospero's higher purpose; Caliban's changes with his moral and linguistic development. In the process of accommodation, both come to re-evaluate the meaning of freedom and love within those contracts. These acts of contractual negotiation, niggling over obligations and their limits, seem to be the fundamental political principle of the play; this is the fruit of the failure of its attempt to build up politics from more elemental ingredients in its consideration of Stoicism and Epicureanism.²⁰⁸ But as I have already observed, adapting Evett with respect to the play's criterion of spiritual discernment, the "sign of Jonah" (section 8), the re-evaluation of freedom within a contract of compulsion, marked as a spiritual maturation, is Paul's characterization of the new covenant in Galatians. Thus the theology of covenantal maturation from law to spirit is unavoidable in treating these political or cosmological forms of maturation.

²⁰⁷ Kim Zarins has described how the medieval and renaissance myth of the man in the moon, a labourer exiled for stealing firewood, appeals to Caliban's sympathies; she also speculates on the links between the myth and post-Galilean ideas of the moon as a new world subject to colonial explorations. Her essay suggests the richness of lunar imagery in the play. Caliban may identify with the man-in-the-moon but be characterized by the play as more of a Gibeonite.

²⁰⁸ Acts of freedom in the play then are never absolute or final, but determined in ways evocative of legal theorist Paul Kahn's claim that freedom is not caused or determined by norms, but constructed through and with reference to existing norms by interpretation.

So, what of the particular maturations that matter for the play, the changing attitude to the moon, to matter, and to magic? The covenant of the spirit is sometimes phrased as anti-materialist: it transcends the enslavement to the “rudiments” (as the Geneva Bible has it) (Gal 4:3) of the world, the latter phrase often translated as “elements” (for example, by the King James and Wycliffe translations). Similarly, the slave Hagar’s son was born under the flesh, while the free woman Sarah’s son was born under the promise (Gal 4:23); this comparison identifies freedom with covenant (“promise”) as opposed to fleshly bondage or materialism, transmuting by adding a volitional element to the similar material generation of both sons, in a manner similar to the play’s treatment of virtual parenthood. Those who in the covenant are free with Christ must live for the spirit and not flesh; indeed they must crucify the flesh and its lusts and affections (Gal 5:24), just as demanded by the play’s mortifying or kenotic episodes. A further development of covenant theology identifies the Mosaic covenant with that of nature, based on Romans’ argument that the gentiles could learn in nature all of the law (Rom. 2:14), and claims that this natural law sufficed for Adam in Eden but not for fallen man (Coolidge 101ff). This latter development gives covenantal theology the explicit flexibility to accommodate to changes in nature, human nature, or human understanding of nature. The flexibility of the Christian covenant extends the adaptive nature of the Old Testament covenants from Adam through Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David. Shakespeare’s play, I suggest, is doing something similar.²⁰⁹

John Cotton’s analysis of covenantal theology a few decades seem to be a fairly accurate description of the flexibility of the theological cosmology of *The Tempest*.²¹⁰ The consequences include both ethical and metaphysical claims. John Coolidge frames Cotton’s view as follows:

²⁰⁹ The Galatians, like Caliban, were pagans, and Paul chastises them for renewing their bondage to the “rudiments” or “elements” by observing Jewish ritual, the observation of “days, and months, and times, and years,” which Paul lumps in with their pagan idolatry (Gal. 8-10). Given *Midsummer*’s use of the Pauline troping of lunar temporality with Jewish ritual, the covenantal argument gives the Galatians’ backsliding into ritual “rudiments” or “elements” a particularly materialist resonance evocative of Caliban’s own backsliding into polytheism, his exclamation to Setebos even as he renews his contract with Prospero.

²¹⁰ cp. also Coolidge 108 quoting William Ames on Jeremiah’s covenant of day and night.

The whole fabric of nature can be described as consisting of conditions established by God and indicative of the relation of all things to God. Order is thus not immanent in the world, but consists of God's covenantal revelation of his will with respect to all his creatures. Man can therefore trust the underlying order of temporal experience, but not presume upon it. Its very sureness teaches him to look to his own covenantal relation with God, and only to that, as the basis of his being; fallen man, however, must find himself condemned by the condition of that Covenant but for the supervention of saving grace, which is the only condition not implied in the whole order of conditions but entering into it in mid course, so that it is wholly new. (Coolidge 119)

This understanding of nature as a product of covenants is somewhere between Hooker's understanding of natural law-based regularity and Calvin's understanding of God's spiritual agency constantly and miraculously ensuring natural regularity (cp. my introduction). Against both Hooker and Calvin, Cotton presents a different stress on the relationship that agency establishes between God and humanity, an relationship that reinscribes the order of nature itself as the product of mutual trust. This has implications both for human and divine obligations. As Coolidge argues, for the human agent, covenantalism avoids on the one hand antinomianism and on the other the assertion of a mechanical connection between faith and the works it produces; for the divine agent, Cotton describes a covenantal understanding of God's providence that depends not on miracles for its efficacy but instead on the particularly human sense of reciprocal obligation – not contractual exchange per se, but rather the more general principle of keeping promises.

This principle underlines both the action of grace and Christian morality. As Coolidge explains,

“It is true indeed,” says Cotton, “God worketh all things after the counsel of his will; but that proveth not that God carrieth all things with an absolute and unconditional decree of providence.” Miracles are rare; God's ordinary way of effecting his purposes with respect to his creatures is according to the conditions of the Covenants which relate them to him. Man responds to his condition in a different manner from the day and the night or the fowls and the beasts, however, and is thus responsible in a special way. His very consciousness of God's faithfulness in keeping covenants evokes the sense of a duty in himself to be faithful in return. This sense of responsibility is related to the prudence which obeys the laws of nature simply in order to avoid being hurt; doubtless it is also related to the “mercenary morality” which looks for life in exchange for prescribed works; but it is a more fundamental

principle than either. Far from being nullified by conversion, this fundamental sense of responsibility to God is only understood clearly in the light of the Gospel, for only then is it disentangled from considerations of prudence or the acquisition of merit. The experience of grace is not an isolated flash or a strange detachment from the conditions of temporal life; it is the realization of an entirely new condition involving all the others. (Coolidge 119-120)

Coolidge's description of Cotton's understanding of the ethics of covenant theology - in particular its surpassing prudence and "mercenary morality" - help us understand, with Evett, the Christian impulses shaping the play's surpassing of the Epicurean and Stoic ethics it begins with. If grace is a new condition involving all the other covenants, the play seems to suggest that it is the sign of Jonah - the pattern of experience transcending prudence and mercenary morality - that makes these covenants legible as gracious and new.

Moreover this version of covenant theology's indifference to miracles and insistence that the covenant with humanity is different from the covenant with the day and night or the Noachide covenant with the animals seems to model what I am calling the play's new covenant of materialism, in which covenantal accommodation or adaption to changing understandings and conditions is a way to avoid reductive materialism. In other words, though conditioned through the problem of spiritual discernment, the play's ethics are constructed not on ontological but imaginative grounds, in the vaguely defined capacities to imagine and consent that distinguish humans from animals or from inanimate matter. The accommodation of covenants is necessary given both human fallenness and changing social and historical situations (as the adapting covenants in the Bible attest) and the fact that nature is still a far way off from being known, and potentially (due to the lingering presence of Ariel, the residual possibility of the miraculous) ultimately unknowable. This flexible form of covenantalism is a way of constraining the anti-realist impulses of both miraculism/occasionalism or skepticism, while also avoiding a rush to a realism based on a metaphysics that is still full of uncertainty.

Prospero's revels speech suggests most explicitly that given metaphysical uncertainty, the Epicurean or Stoic ethics the play's opening investigates are inadequate; the ethical

and political impulses of the play are located at the level of the imagination, the only capacity that can provide the accommodations that are sure to be necessary in the future.

Our revels now are ended. These our actors,
 As I foretold you, were all spirits, and
 Are melted into air, into thin air,
 And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
 The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
 The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
 Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
 And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
 Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
 As dreams are made on, and our little life
 Is rounded with a sleep. (4.1.148-58)

The speech's grandiose comparison of the "baseless fabric" of a spirit pageant with the solid material architecture of splendor, power, and the world itself, collapses into the smaller comparison of the human being to the "stuff" of dreams. Potentially suggesting the mental pneuma or material fantasy, like Gonzalo's provisions of "stuffs and necessities," "stuff" here has intentionally vague reference. The mundane generic material noun is the passive subject on which fantasies – of any kind, good or bad, literal or figural – can be constructed. Against some recent critical claims to the contrary, no specific physical theory seems to me to be implied;²¹¹ the speech's repeated similes are circumlocutions calculated to avoid material specificity. Though they are illusionistically spanned by the "air" of the airy spirits, tickled by the cloud-capped towers – a point to which I will return – the similes create a conceptual space between the material and the spiritual that leaves open a world of possibility even while circumscribing it by a gentler version of the apocalypse, a sleep euphemizing death.

But this euphemizing is far from either Caliban's groggy cry to dream again (3.2.140-1) or Antonio's opportunistic conflation of sleep and death (2.1.258-60). In Prospero's formulation, sleep not only surrounds but "rounds" or shapes waking life; limitation is a formative principle, and Prospero's passive construct – "such stuff / as dream *are made*

²¹¹ cp. Maisano.

on” – is the beginning of his renunciation of power. It is impossible to both wake and dream, to simultaneously create one’s own fantasy and be the material of someone else’s, but the alternation or accommodation of the two perspectives is crucial. Caliban’s cry to dream again expresses the pain of the inability to accommodate these perspectives.

Read politically, this accommodation has to do with power, and Prospero’s epilogue has often been read as a performative confession of weakness disarming an audience suspicious of Prospero’s earlier tyranny; often enough, however it has equally been read as a cynical or Machiavellian ploy. To conclude I want to treat Prospero’s epilogue within the terms I have been developing in this chapter. The play’s sovereigns, Alonso and Prospero, partly experience the kenotic pattern I have identified with the sign of Jonah, but their status as sovereigns makes them in different ways both closer and more distant from Christ’s example. In other words, they seem to shift toward the first person of the godhead; unlike the other kenotic exemplars in the play who suffer themselves, both at first offer *substitutionary* sacrifices. Yet they differ in their proximity to those sacrifices. Prospero’s renunciation of magic, a renunciation phrased in the language of breaking and burying his staff, and drowning his book, suggests the abrogation of symbols of office – a scepter, a contract or charter – which anticipates but differs from his eventual death. This difference is crucial; Prospero is not dead at the end of the play, rather he is still maturing. Prospero’s language of burial and drowning, by evoking but severing into two pieces Alonso’s desire to lie muddled in the ooze with his supposedly dead son, is a symbolic death which, unlike Alonso’s, distinguishes between the sacrifice of a contract or symbol and the sacrifice of the self. It holds out the possibility of renewal in a more abstract way than the materialist resurrection fantasy of the sea change, or even Ferdinand’s kenotic rebirth and the sailors’ descent and reascent from the hell-like ship’s hold. But, conversely, Alonso’s loss is virtual in a way Prospero’s isn’t; Ferdinand is not dead, after all, but Prospero does in fact kenotically abandon his god-like powers of staff and book. In this way, though Alonso’s reconciliation is incomplete, Alonso’s pattern of experience is easier to assimilate to Ferdinand’s immaterial suffering than Prospero’s is.

In other words, Prospero appears to be more like Godlike - more willing to sacrifice his powers and his child – than Alonso ever is. But then again, Prospero's his symbols of power, not his daughter, are drowned; rather than re-enacting Christ's originary sacrifice from the perspective of God the father, Prospero sacrifices his old contract, his magic book and staff. Prospero's covenantal renunciation thereby displaces both the Abrahamic covenant Miranda evokes in her demands for miracles in the storm scene, and the Christian covenant understood to be renewed or re-enacted through a strongly embodied understanding of the Eucharist.²¹² Covenantal renewal rather than material reenactment is what matters. Prospero's epilogue involves the renewal of a contract whose terms he dictates but whose acceptance he cannot guarantee.

Prospero's epilogue formulates one understanding of the accommodation of waking and dreaming, of life and death that Caliban desires. Having renounced his power, Prospero is now in the kenotic position of weakness, but he himself elaborates the terms of his contractual renewal into free service by pleading his case. Circumscriptions by mortality and material uncertainty turn into the conditions of a contract which Prospero this time holds himself up to fulfilling. Like other covenants in the play its terms seem to change on the fly, its conditions never exactly clear until their fulfillment is demanded.

Immediately after promising Alonso ideal sailing weather, especially suitable winds, and charging Ariel with delivering them, Prospero's epilogue without initial explanation shifts its burden to the audience. In explaining this burden, Prospero's language and argumentation subtly retraces the argument of the play as a whole while redefining yet again Ariel's airy power as a middle term between nature and grace, though one carefully subject to covenantal constraint.

First he begins with a simple assertion of weakness and dependence, a necessitarian posing of a dichotomy:

²¹² cp. Waldron, *Reformations*.

Now my charms are all o'erthrown,
 And what strength I have's mine own,
 Which is most faint: now, 'tis true,
 I must be here confined by you,
 Or sent to Naples. (5.1.319-23).

The ambivalence of the word “o’erthrown” used in the passive sense here— literally thrown overboard into the water, but generally suggesting usurpation – reduces Prospero’s volitional power in his kenotic renunciation, increasing the burden of choice he places on the audience. He augments this choice by a moral claim:

Let me not,
 Since I have my dukedom got
 And pardon'd the deceiver, dwell
 In this bare island by your spell; (323-6)

Since he has shown mercy, the audience should not use magic to curse him. The phrasing of confinement as witchcraft or spell-casting is a clever rhetorical move, amplifying the difference in power between himself, now without magic, and his putative jailers. An audience should not engage in witchcraft, but a milder form of magic, applause and cheers:

But release me from my bands
 With the help of your good hands:
 Gentle breath of yours my sails
 Must fill, or else my project fails, Which was to please. (327-31)

The breath of the audience here directly replaces the wind Ariel was meant to supply. Like the implicit extension of Ariel’s contract beyond its terms, this retrospective assertion introduces a new obligation implicitly there all along, an aesthetic contract with the audience. But is this redefinition of Prospero’s project, from a magical reclamation of power to merely an aesthetic one, legitimate? Is this a Gibeonic reframing of Prospero’s political and religious trickery by an overriding aesthetic contract? This seems like special pleading, a rather abrupt transformation of terms in which the audience is to judge him. Luckily Prospero doesn’t stop there, reiterating his argument from the beginning premise of weakness, raising the stakes to the soteriological:

Now I want
 Spirits to enforce, art to enchant,
 And my ending is despair,
 Unless I be relieved by prayer,
 Which pierces so that it assaults
 Mercy itself and frees all faults. (331-6)

In assuming the position of the despairing sailors of the opening storm, Prospero seems to have put the audience into his own initial position, completing the transfer of power from magician to audience. In doing so the breath that we thought would fill winds has been converted to prayer, and the efficacious spell of the conjurer has become the holy language of the devout.

But by transforming Ariel's wind to the audience's cheers and again to the language of prayer, Prospero is introducing a third party into the system of obligation. This makes his claim to have pardoned not a simple reciprocal balancing of his request for mercy. Instead, Ariel's material spirit becomes the fungible stuff of covenantal theology implicating the deity in subsidiary covenants. Indeed, it is never quite clear who is praying here. Whether Prospero prays to a deity or to the audience, he concludes with one more twist, which both definitively transforms his potentially dangerous conjuring and embeds it in a political economy of salvation:

As you from crimes would pardon'd be,
 Let your indulgence set me free. (337-8)

Like the external supplements hubristically assumed by Alonso and Stephano, the epilogue asks the audience to be the external supplement shoring up Prospero's remaining claims to sovereignty. In granting their indulgence, whether prayer on his behalf or applause, the audience assumes the combined role of the winds who only lovingly harmed him on his first voyage, and his people who never abandoned their love. But, then again, loving breath and loving wind are not here the shapeless fantasies of dreams, the unconstrained air spirits melt into. Nor are they the love-games of Miranda's excusing Ferdinand's false play. Rather than arbitrary winds or arbitrary love freely given, they are governed by the language of crime and indulgence.

Stuart Clark has argued in general that when thought alongside constitutional forms of government, witchcraft was seen not as a sin against God, equated with usurpation of the mystical monarch, but rather as a crime like any other (Clark *Thinking with demons* Ch. 40); Prospero's language of crime rather than sin therefore fits handily with his apparent appeal to popular legitimation. But Prospero's word "indulgence" is much more theologically loaded term. I will not claim that Shakespeare is reclaiming with its full force the corrupt system of indulgences that was the impetus to the Reformation. Rather, I would suggest that covenantal relationships can under some circumstances act in a similar way to satisfy each others' claims, forming and shaping the terrifying excesses of free or unmerited grace. But in comparison to the materialist or mechanist corruption of the pre-Reformation system of indulgences which *The Duchess of Malfi* exploits, *The Tempest's* equivocations about substance, and here its figures of air's mutability, make these mutable covenants a much more complex interlacing of substance, intention, and aesthetic power.

By asking the audience to legitimate his kenosis, this moment is an exception to the play's pattern of marking spiritual discernment with the sign of Jonah; here, rather than the experience of the sufferer, the experience of the audience is the legitimating criterion. Yet my discussion of covenantal theology reveals how sovereign power is still not absent from this argument. Allowing Prospero to reascend, establishing that his creation of vulnerability was not a mistake, Prospero implies, is the only way that can avoid betraying his trust, his artistic good faith. This, he seems to suggest, is the only way a legitimate covenantal order can be perpetuated, avoiding the descent into a Hobbesian or Machiavellian tyranny. The paradox of this figure of indulgences is that it makes political reciprocity, even theurgy, possible in a very rarified sense that at the moment of asking – in the playhouse – is also a popular sense. Casting the epilogue as democratic seems to be an overstatement. It is an exceptional performance of weakness which is also a slippery rhetorical manipulation of its audience, the resumption of the arguments about obligation Prospero began the play with that not only retrospectively asserts an aesthetic contract but also constructs an anticipatory sense of obligation, a threat which is also a promise: "As you from crimes would pardon'd be ..." This duality is asymmetrical, since

Prospero with charms overthrown must rely on a third party to punish crimes, though if restored he may pardon them. The implicit presence of a third party, the deity, makes this promise of release as equivocal as Ariel's freedom.²¹³ If this slipperiness was the product of the political negotiations of 1610 (Hamilton 44ff), I have also been trying to argue that it was the product of a moment in which the substance and structure of the world itself was proving stranger than expected, and was likely to continue changing. In such circumstances surely any available promise which seemed adaptable whatever came next – despite or because of its vagueness – was worth holding on to.

²¹³ Greenblatt's essay on "Martial Law in the Land of Cockaigne" (in *Shakespearean Negotiations*) suggests that theatrical representations of the social phenomenon of the salutary arousal of anxiety, while portraying the playwright as the manipulator of general political and theological anxiety, defuse this anxiety by their necessary generation of theatrical pleasure (see 129-146, esp 133-135, 138). Prospero's epilogue's claims to please approach this position, but in identifying applause with indulgences the fungibility of the air makes his threat (along with its theatrical frame breaking) more rather less than defused. It is as if rather than emptying out anxiety by representation, Prospero is doing the opposite, trying to guarantee anxiety by collapsing representational distance and appealing to a third party; the play's airy ontology, the threat of hanging, endorses this movement. Greenblatt's treatment of the epilogue frames it as a displacement of power over anxiety from the performer to the audience, without addressing the third party (157); his concluding description of an aporia between free aesthetic economies and ones based on scarcity (159-60) does not recognize the theological pattern of spiritual supplement I have been discussing.

Coda: Drowning Satan's Moon

When Milton's Satan swims to shore in Hell's fiery lake, the poet makes us see the shield slung over his back as Galileo's moon:

his ponderous shield
Ethereal temper, massy, large and round,
Behind him cast; the broad circumference
Hung on his shoulders like the Moon, whose Orb
Through Optic Glass the Tuscan Artist views
At Ev'ning from the top of Fesole,
Or in Valdarno, to descry new Lands,
Rivers or Mountains in her spotty Globe. (1.285-291)

But Milton does not here recreate in poetry Galileo's phenomenological experience of looking at the moon, studying the movement of light and shadow revealed by his telescope; instead he tells us of Galileo's conclusions, framing them as tied to Galileo's prejudices and ambitions. The shield is "massy, large and round," like the solid moon that suggested a "new land" to be conquered, with rivers and mountains like the familiar "Fesole" and "Valdarno" of the Tuscan landscape. In this context Galileo's ambitions match Satan's colonial ones to conquer Hell and Earth.

Yet the terms of description belie both Galileo's reasoning and Satan's ambition. Despite its "ethereal temper" or substance it is "spotty" or marred. There is no inconsistency between celestial substance and damage wrought by the deity's anger; Satan bears scars. When Satan stands on the shore summoning his legions, Milton shifts his attention from lunar substance to lunar influence:

he stood and call'd
His legions, Angel Forms, who lay intrans't
Thick as Autumnal Leaves that strow the Brooks
In Vallombrosa, where th'Etrurian Shades
High overarch't imbowr; or scatterd sedge
Afloat, when with fierce Winds Orion arm'd
Hath vext the Red-Sea Coast, whose waves orethrew
Busiris and his Memphian Chivalry,
While with perfidious hatred they pursu'd
The Sojourners of Goshen, who beheld
From the safe shore thir floating Carkases

And broken Chariot Wheels, so thick bestrown
 Abject and lost lay these, covering the Flood,
 Under amazement of thir hideous change. (1.300-313)

Again passing through the same Tuscan landscape, Milton this time steers the reader to a biblical paradigm to interpret it. Whether or not astrological influence – the moon's or Orion's – raised the storm that drowned them, like the devils the Egyptian cavalry was punished to serve God's immediate purposes. Satan's subsequent raising of the devils, which Milton compares to Moses summoning locusts, reinforces this point by broadening the providential perspective. What seemed huge seems tiny, and what seemed to be rebels are now merely God's scourges.

In describing the moon, then, Milton acknowledges the post-Galilean arguments about lunar substance and influence and the possibility of multiple worlds but contains them all by God's overwhelming and multifarious power. Not only is Milton's Raphael indifferent to the debate over the two chief world systems (heliocentric or geocentric), but Milton's cosmos can accept both naturalistic and miraculist perspectives. It is baroque not only in its spatio-temporal terms but in its theological cosmology; for all Milton's stress on choice, in these terms he often seems indifferent to choosing. For example, Milton's careful explanations of Satan's possession of the serpent is balanced by the metamorphosis of the devils into snakes after the Fall in ways suggestive of the arguments about demonic powers in cases of witchcraft and lycanthropy. While Satan's potential space for trickery is magnified the more carefully one identifies ambiguities in nature – to offer microscopic rather than telescopic examples, the perplexities of faculty psychology and speech in humans and animals, in the serpent's throat, or Eve's ear canals – Milton compensates by amplifying God's infinite power in the act of metamorphosis. If God wants demonic or cosmological bodies to transform, they will, whatever microscopes or telescopes show us.

The apparent exception – the main event – is of course the human will. Milton does not accept Calvin's image of the soul as a raindrop on an invisible string. His analysis of sympathy is too complex to treat here and the subject of much current research (Lobis; Goodhand; Cummings, "Sympathy"). Yet Satan can not only insinuate himself into

Eve's dream, but also hold the apple up to her nose and mouth eliciting a feeling of irresistible compulsion to taste. Why then does God simply advise Adam and Eve in the adaptive but abstract language of covenants and interdictions, lucid in moral terms but with vague material consequences like dying the death and seeds crushing serpents' heads? Is Adam's affective intuition – of happiness, of love – a compensatory method of discernment Eve somehow lacks? Why is God so ineffective in his persuasions?

I might suggest that Milton provides a dialectical reversal of this question in his presentation of God's revelation as a form of divine theatrics supplementing his covenants. These theatrics can be hamfisted – as in his personated conversations with himself, self-begetting, and political-theological games in heaven – or they can be supremely naturalistic, as in the presentation of Eden as a theatre; *Midsummer's* theatricality exists between these poles. But subsequent to the Fall the theatre of revelation becomes the more obscure dynamics of sacred history explored in Michael's prophecy, *Samson Agonistes*, and *Paradise Regained*. The exile from Eden marks the fall from baroque perspective into the world of faintly felt providence as guide. Yet history also makes available the kind of discernment at work when Satan's moon is belittled by the Red Sea – like the sign of Jonah locally, or the fortunate Fall universally, the hope is that sacred history, with perspective, makes legible a moral structure underlying a complexly ramifying natural causality. In this hope as much as in his range of theatricalities, Milton summarizes the paradoxes of secularization I have been exploring.

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